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THE OLD RÉGIME

THE

OLD RÉGIME

COURT, SALONS, AND THEATRES.

BY

Catherine Charlotte, Lady Jackson.

"Le dixseptième siècle fut l'époque du génie et des œuvres d'imagination; le dixhuitième fut celle du doute, des recherches et des sciences exactes."

"Aux élans de l'imagination succède l'émulation du savoir, et le bel-esprit remplace le génie. L'orgueil humain met en doute tout ce qu'il ne comprend pas, et le siècle savant devient sceptique."

DE TOCQUEVILLE

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

37644

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON,
Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty the Queen.
1880.

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THE OLD RÉGIME.

COURT, SALONS, AND THEATRES.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

A FEELING of joy thrills through every pulse in the nation. The French people are aware that their *Grand Monarque* is stricken down by disease which seems likely to terminate in death. Deliverance at last, then, is at hand. Deliverance from a moral incubus, as it were, that has long weighed heavily on all classes, and, ever increasing in oppressiveness, is become a burden to them well-nigh intolerable.

During the past year the king's health had been visibly declining. He had undergone also

unusual mental anxiety. The expediency of nominating a Council of Regency, and giving his legitimated sons prominent posts in it, had been urged on him with extreme persistency, by Madame de Maintenon and the Duchesse du Maine. They suggested that thus would the recently-conferred rights of those princes, who, in the possible failure of the legitimate line, were to be called on to ascend the throne, be more firmly secured to them. At the same time, a needful check would be placed on the ambitious, even criminal, views attributed to the dissolute Duc d'Orleans, in the near prospect of his assuming the regency. The king adopted the course recommended, to free himself, it has been said, from further importunity. But, as if foreseeing how little consideration such an arrangement would receive when the time came for giving effect to it, Saint-Simon asserts that when Louis XIV. had signed this important testament, he exclaimed, "*Il deviendra ce qu'il pourra; mais au moins je serai tranquille, et je n'en entendrai plus parler.*"

This was in 1714. He had made these concessions, then, to purchase repose for the brief span of time that remained to him. But he did not yet allow that he felt any symptoms

of disease. He said he was perfectly well, he indeed resented the allusions to his impaired state of health conveyed in the recommendations of his physician, at the suggestion of Madame de Maintenon, that his majesty would eat fewer strawberries and green peas. His constitution had been vigorous. Habitually he drank little wine, but he ate voraciously; often in the course of the night. He had always had a very large appetite, which he still retained and continued to indulge, not only with immoderate quantities of strawberries and peas, but with a variety of highly-seasoned dishes.* For another twelve months he bore up bravely enough; neither discontinued nor shortened his accustomed daily walks, notwithstanding uncomfortable sensations in the legs, nor absented himself from the royal hunts, though he returned from them much out of temper, being prostrated by fatigue.

But, on the 13th of August, 1715, still heedless of the warnings he had received to *ménager* his failing strength, he gave audience, standing, to the Persian ambassador and his suite, and conversed with him, through an interpreter, for a

* Lettres de Mde. de Maintenon.

considerable time. The next day he was compelled to succumb. His despotic will had subdued and crushed out the spirit of a great nation, but its strength was found weakness in the struggle with failing nature. So the *Grand Monarque* kept his bed that day, hoping to rise on the morrow with strength recruited and well braced up for his customary part in the ceremonial to be observed on the great Fête of St. Louis. After receiving the Eucharist, the solemn farce of touching for the king's evil was then usually performed, the suppliants kneeling in a line on either side of the corridor leading from the chapel to the palace. As the shadow of the superb Louis fell upon these poor creatures, and the act of grace conveyed in the touch of the royal hand of the "Anointed of the Lord and eldest son of the Church" was vouchsafed to them, the Cardinal Grand Almoner, with attendant bishops, followed, *en grande tenue*, repeating the formula, "*Le roi te touche, Dieu te guérisse.*"

It appears that an unusually large number of suffering children had been brought from various parts of France, for this particular fête, as a favourable occasion for the cure of their ailments by the royal touch. Great, therefore,

was the disappointment and despair of the friends of these unfortunates, when it was announced that the ceremony could not take place. The king was very languid and weak that morning, and his physicians declared that an attempt to attend would be fatal to him. To weakness succeeded pain, but it was not until the 25th, though daily growing worse, sight and hearing also failing him, that he would believe death to be so near at hand. It was then that the Grand Almoner, Cardinal de Rohan, thinking the occasion one likely to be productive of much spiritual consolation to the ailing monarch, and of especial benefit to the halt and the maimed who sought healing from his touch, mentioned to the king that the presbytery was crowded with poor sick folk, come from afar, for his Majesty's Fête. The curé of Versailles had charitably assembled them there, and, as means offered, was despatching them to their homes. But the cardinal interfered and prevented this, and obtained the king's consent to the ceremony of the *attouchement* being performed in his bedchamber, on the morning of the 26th. The fatigue of it was so great that, although his hands were supported by the ecclesiastics at his bedside, it was not fully

completed when the king fell heavily back on his cushions, as if dead.

For upwards of five hours he remained in a state of utter unconsciousness. So little was he expected to revive, that Madame de Maintenon was prevailed on to leave for St. Cyr, and as no signs of returning life were perceived after three hours' anxious watching, the courtiers who crowded the *salons* and antechambers of the palace, gradually departed to fill the hitherto deserted apartments of the Duc d'Orleans.

But Louis XIV. still lives, recovers from his lengthened swoon and inquires for Madame de Maintenon, for whom a courier is instantly despatched. The news, the unwelcome news, swiftly reaches the Palais Royal. Immediately the worshippers of the rising sun fly back to pay homage to the setting luminary; whom, in their precipitancy, when but obscured by a passing cloud, they believed already sunk below the horizon. Versailles again swarms with anxious inquirers, and the Duc d'Orleans is left once more alone. He laughs cynically at the practical lesson he has received of the truth of the maxim of his former preceptor, the Abbé Dubois, who had striven to impress it indelibly on his mind, that "the mainspring of all men's

actions is sheer self-interest." It is the basis of the duke's moral creed, that virtue is wholly non-existent, and that the so-called moral qualities, though invested with names, are but the sentimental imaginings of the inexperienced and weak-minded.

An empiric, who had treated with success some complaints of the same sciatic nature as that from which the king was supposed to be suffering, was permitted to prescribe for him a so-called elixir. Its effects were speedy, and apparently beneficial; a satisfaction to the very few who desired the prolongation of a reign already too long by fifteen years, as most persons thought. The revival, however, was but as a transitory gleam from a fading fire; the spark of life was too nearly extinct to be rekindled. Louis himself was quite conscious of it, and expressed a wish that his successor should be brought to him, and his family assemble around him. He remarked on the 29th that he had not heard the *aubade*, or military *reveil*, which it was customary, at dawn of day, to play under his chamber windows; and he gave orders that neither it, nor the usual daily performance in the Salle des Gardes, at his dinner hour, of the sixty musicians of his private band, should be dis-

continued, until the Grand Aumonier announced the administration of the last sacraments.

The regret, the remorse, said to have been evinced by Louis XIV. for many of the acts of his past life; his injunctions to his youthful heir to avoid treading in the path of vain-glory he had himself pursued, and which had brought so much sorrow and suffering on the nation; his recommendation of the aged Madame de Maintenon to the kindness and generosity of his nephew; and his somewhat specious statement to that nephew respecting the provisions of his testament, need not here be enlarged upon. Nor is it necessary to repeat the speeches attributed to him on his death-bed. Those stagey, oratorical death-beds are the reverse of edifying; and it is probable that the king was as little loquacious as poor human nature at its last gasp usually is. The *Grand Monarque* died on the first of September, and the announcement of "his death was hailed throughout France with an explosion of delight;" for it was regarded as the end of a public calamity, the removal of the yoke of bondage he had bound on the neck of the nation.

Such was the agitated state of public feeling in the first frenzied burst of popular joy, that it

was deemed expedient, in order to avoid insult from a turbulent crowd that surrounded Versailles, to convey Madame de Maintenon to St. Cyr, in the private carriage of Maréchal de Villeroi; also to post small parties of guards at short intervals along the road, to protect her from ill-treatment should she be recognized. The *reliques* worn by the king, and which, probably, were her gifts, were handed to her. They became objects of fervent adoration at St. Cyr. A piece of the "wood of the true cross," amongst "*des mieux avérées de reliques*," she says, she presented to her niece, Madame de Caylus, a lady of very wavering faith and worldly tastes.

Louis XIV. had, doubtless, succeeded in convincing himself, as well as his subjects, that he was the incarnation of glory and grandeur. He was actually the centre of authority, and the possessor of power more irresponsible and absolute than any French monarch before or since has wielded. To stamp out the vigour of the nation, to suppress the slightest manifestation of national sentiment, were the great objects of his reign, from the time of the Fronde. If he

had acquired little else, he had thoroughly acquired the art of reigning with despotic and uncontrolled sway. In that sense, and in that alone, Louis XIV. was a great king; though very far indeed from being a great man. He was the light and glory, the sun and centre, of the system of government of which he was the creator. It was his sublime good pleasure, as ruler of France, to be all things to all men; to allow them no will of their own, but to make his the pivot on which opinion and feeling throughout the nation should turn. And he succeeded; so readily do the French yield to a high-handed despot. Men fell into the habit of saying, "*Sa Majesté m'en garde*," instead of, "*à Dieu ne plaise*," and generally of speaking of their *Grand Monarque* with far more humility and reverence than of the Ruler of the universe. "*L'état, c'était lui—La France, c'était lui*"—*La patrie* had become an obsolete term, merged in that of "Le Roi."

The dissolute pleasures of his younger days, when vice was so exquisitely varnished that it was said to have put on the dignified aspect of virtue, naturally, with advancing years, grew less attractive to him. He turned then to devotion. His court followed suit. Piety was

the fashion; even the *bourgeoisie* became more devout, and all who aspired to win favour wore a sanctimonious air.

> " Lorsque le grand Louis brûla d'un tendre amour,
> Paris devint Cythère, et tout suivit la cour ;
> Quand il se fit dévôt, ardent à la prière,
> Tout zélé citadin marmota son bréviaire."
>
> *Epît. du Gd. Frederic.*

Primness was good taste with *les jolies dames*, who, however, contrived to invest it with a certain air of *espiéglerie* that was *très coquette*, and very effective under a "sad-coloured" coiffe. Court balls were not wholly given up; they were only less frequent, and the hours devoted to them fewer; perhaps because they were somewhat formal and dull, notwithstanding the romping and boisterous gaiety of the young Duchess of Burgundy. State concerts also sometimes took place. Madame de Maintenon would have had them solely devoted to the singing of the canticles of the Church. But Louis was, in this respect, less rigid than she. He still loved to hear his own praises, and to sing them himself, in the fulsome verses of Quinault, set to music by Lulli. Lulli's music was then thought rather out of date, but the king, who piqued himself on his musical taste,

would listen to the works of no other composer, ignoring altogether the rising reputation of Compra and Rameau.

In the absence of other excitement, play was pursued with increased avidity. The stakes were higher, the losses more ruinous. It should be remembered that it was when piety was most in favour with Louis XIV., the greatest *roué* of the eighteenth century made his *début* at Marly, and was petted and caressed by the whole court, including both Madame de Maintenon and the king. "*C'est un prodige*," writes the former; "*c'est la plus aimable poupée du monde.*" This prodigy was the young Duc de Fronsac, afterwards de Richelieu—a libertine from his youth. He danced, we are told, with wonderful grace; fenced with inimitable skill; rode with the ease and dashing bearing of an accomplished cavalier; and sought the good graces of the ladies with extraordinary success. The pious court of Marly was the real scene of "Les premiers amours de Richelieu." He was then in his fifteenth year.

From twenty to thirty thousand francs were lost by this brilliant youth in the course of an evening at a *tête-à-tête* game of cards. He made love with exceeding persistency to the

Duchess of Burgundy, who at least appears to have been amused by it, and to have smiled so graciously upon him that it gave rise to many *plaisanteries*, which reached the king's ears and displeased him extremely. Idle tongues were immediately silenced; and this dangerous young gentleman—already married to Mdlle. de Noailles—was dismissed the court. A *lettre-de-cachet*, enclosed in a letter of strong complaint, was despatched to his father, who himself took charge of his hopeful son, and conveyed him to the Bastille. To amuse him, for inability to ramble about Paris was his only punishment, a clever, pleasant-tempered Abbé was sent to him, as companion and tutor. During his confinement he acquired some notions of reading and writing, and, assisted by the Abbé, was supposed to have translated Virgil. De Fronsac was not a solitary instance of vicious propensities in the rising generation of courtiers at that period of hypocritical devotion. Many of the young nobility resembled him, and were looking forward no less anxiously than the *bourgeoisie* for the ardently desired liberty then anticipated from a change of rulers.

Famine and pestilence, meanwhile, were frequent in the provinces, and their victims were

numerous. Distress was general, and so extremely severe during the terrible winter of 1709-10, that of the mass of the French people a large proportion could scarcely obtain bread to appease hunger. Yet letters and memoirs attest that the king was as selfishly extravagant and reckless in expenditure as ever. New taxes were imposed on the suffering people, for the State's coffers were empty. The needs of the king and his armies were pressing, and money must be wrung from some quarter. Were not the possessions of his subjects his to their last *écu?*—the control of their purses, no less than the control of their consciences, the indisputable prerogative of his kingly power? Louis XIV. was convinced that it was so. Yet he conscientiously sought for his conviction the sanction of high ecclesiastical authority.

"Mankind," says Dr. Moore, "are governed by force and opinion. They were the agents made use of by Louis XIV. in a supreme degree. Aided by them he had brought his subjects to submit with alacrity to heavier exactions than were ever wrung by tyranny from man." But although national pride, love of independence, and every noble and elevating sentiment seemed to be extinguished in France,

yet, as the reign of Louis XIV. drew towards its close, the misery and ruin he had wrought in the land kindled in men's hearts the fire of an intense hate, a feverish impatience of the existing order of things, and an ardent longing for the end of it. No wonder, then, that when the end came it was hailed throughout the land with delirious joy, and that the people, as with one voice, shouted thanksgiving to God for the deliverance vouchsafed to them.

To the infant prince who succeeded him Louis XIV. left a kingdom drained to the utmost of its resources; an empty treasury, and a debt of near two hundred millions sterling; lands ravaged by foreign foes; commerce destroyed, and once flourishing manufactures extinct. In the ruined provinces, a despairing, depressed population; and amongst the enervated and corrupt aristocracy, reared amidst the idle pleasures of a vicious, hypocritical court, not one able statesman to take the helm of a government, long isolated in the person of an absolute ruler whose place was now filled by so feeble an image of royalty.

Louis XIV. left his heart to the Jesuits. His body, on the 9th of September, was borne with little ceremony to the Abbey of St. Denis.

As at the funeral of his father, near seventy-three years before, "the people"—to use the words of Tallemant des Reaux on that occasion —"followed as joyously as though going to a wedding." But even greater indecorum was anticipated. In consequence, the funeral procession, forsaking the high road, reached St. Denis by the way of the fields and bye-paths. A frantic multitude had assembled in the faubourg, and received "with gibes and curses the coffin of the conqueror, whom they accused of being the cause of their troubles, and of wars which sprang only from his arrogance, ambition, and injustice."* Throughout the day a sort of fair was held on the *Place* near the abbaye, and dancing and singing, drinking and jesting, were kept up with vociferous glee until nightfall. "*On aurait dit*," says De Tocqueville, "*que la licence des petits soupers du régent descendait déjà sur la place publique.*"

Thus, preluding, as it were, to that ferociously insane joy with which, eighty years later on, his tomb was violated and his ashes scattered to the wind, was celebrated the passing away of the *Grand Monarque*, and, with it,

* Soulavie.

as it is customary to say, the grandeur and glory of the old French Monarchy. The revolution to be accomplished towards the end of the century may be said to have begun at this time. The intervening period, though too generally characterized by frivolity and freedom—even licence—in the manners of the day, was, nevertheless, in its social aspects often animated and dramatic. Distinct, be it observed, from those political events and changes of government which led to anarchy, strife, and bloodshed, and eventually to the overthrow of the monarchy. These are matters to be left to the grave historian to descant upon. Here they need be but very cursorily glanced at; it being attempted only in the following pages to present a brief sketch of the society of the eighteenth century, in its various phases, from the death of Louis XIV. to the fall of absolutism and the old French Régime, in the person of Louis XVI. and of Marie Antoinette.

CHAPTER II.

The Council of Regency.—Le Duc d'Orleans declared Regent.—Courting Popularity.—First Acts of the Regent.—Golden Opinions.—The Young King.—His First Lit-de-Justice.—The King and his Governor.—The King's First Public Speech.—Popularity of the Regent.

LOUIS XIV. died in the evening; and as in the two preceding reigns, beginning also with a regency, no time was lost in summoning the Parliament. That judicial body assembled before ten the next morning, when the princes of the blood, the peers of the realm, and a brilliant military *cortège*, accompanied the Duc d'Orleans to a *séance* of the *Grand' chambre*. Many were the protestations, on the part of the duke, of his excellent intentions towards the country; of his anxiety for the preservation of the life, and zeal for the welfare, of the young king. He also expressed

a desire to be guided in the fulfilment of his arduous duties by the enlightened counsels and, if needed, sage remonstrances of the august Parliament there assembled. The testament of Louis XIV. was then opened.

Great surprise was evinced, and perhaps felt, by some few who had listened to the duke's profuse promises of using the great power confided to him wisely, when it was found that by the late king's will he was appointed president only of a Council of Regency. The Parliament, therefore—whose most influential members had been gained over by the duke's partizans—being invested, as before, with supreme authority for the occasion, at once proceeded to discuss the expediency of setting aside the testament of their *Grand Monarque.* Its most important provisions were pronounced illegal; no less contrary to all precedent than to the statutes of the realm. The charge of the person of the young king, the control of his education, and the command of the household troops, were assigned by it to the Duc du Maine. But this arrangement was unhesitatingly superseded and, without a single dissentient voice, both the title and the uncontrolled powers of regent were conferred on the Duc

d'Orleans. The young Duc de Bourbon—Condé—hideous in person, ignorant and depraved, and possessing his full share of the violence of temper and brutality of disposition inherent in his race—put in a claim to the control of the king's education. Not being of the required age, twenty-four, his claim was disallowed, and, for the time being, the Duc du Maine was permitted to hold the sinecure post of superintendent of the child-king's studies.

The authority exercised by the parliamentary body had gradually been cut down to zero, during the last forty years, by Louis XIV. Nominally to confirm his edicts, seemed to be the chief object of the existence of a Parliament. Decrees emanating from it he annulled without scruple, when not fully coinciding with his own private views. The privilege of remonstrating had long been withheld from it. However oppressive the taxes, or arbitrary and impolitic the measures approved by the king, and imposed on the people, submission was the rule, and the Parliament, to preserve its own existence, consented to be dumb. Doubtless, then, some degree of secret satisfaction was felt in annulling the testament of so imperious and absolute a ruler. Some secret hope, too, probably that power and

prestige might be regained by the readiness and unanimity with which the aims of the Duc d'Orleans had been met and accomplished.

Nor was this wholly a vain hope. For the regent, courting popularity, and elated by easy victory—the Duc du Maine, whether from timidity or indifference, having opposed no obstacle to it—at once restored to the Parliament its long-withdrawn privilege of remonstrating against unsatisfactory edicts. It did not necessarily follow that the remonstrances would be heeded. The duke, indeed, declared, amidst general applause, that he would not consent to have his hands tied when it was a question of doing good, but would willingly be fettered should he seem inclined to do evil. He, however, proceeded with undue eagerness to overthrow the Système Louis XIV., and to make many ill-considered changes in the administration of government. Even zealous supporters of his claims, appointed to new posts he had created, the Maréchal de Villars, for instance, urged on him the advisability of carrying out his projected reforms with less haste and more judgment.

He had promised—it was, however, notorious that he never kept his promises—that taxation should be diminished, and economy be the order

of the day in the expenditure of the court. To practise or enforce economy was not in his nature or consistent with his habits. Yet the regent, notwithstanding his vicious course of life, had in his character the elements of several good qualities—qualities that might have developed into virtues had not the infamous hands in which it was his misfortune to be placed in his youth, done their utmost to eradicate all that gave promise of good in him. There was frankness and *bonhomie* in his manner, and leniency in his disposition. It was readily believed, too, that a sense of justice, no less than feelings of humanity, prompted his first act of authority —an order to throw open the doors of the Bastille and set the oppressed free.

This was a step that secured for the regent immense popularity. It was a real blessing, too, to many sorrowing families, and to many guiltless victims of despotic caprice, who were languishing away life, sick at heart, and longing for deliverance that came not. To one of these unfortunates, the unexpected message "you are free," proved a message of death. Hope in that drooping heart had given place to despair, and, under the powerful reaction of the startling announcement, the thread of life

suddenly snapped. Another, who had spent thirty-five years in the Bastille, heard of freedom with fear and trembling. The outside world had lost its interest for him. Friends, relatives, home—all were no more. He therefore humbly prayed to be allowed, as a favour, to spend his remaining days within the walls of that prison in which he had been condemned to waste away the vigorous years of manhood, but now, in friendless old age, he clung to as a refuge.

Golden opinions rewarded the regent. The people looked hopefully forward to the speedy sweeping away of the many abuses that had sprung up during the long despotism of Louis XIV. They imagined that past excesses, the scandal of his former life, and the parade he had hitherto made of vice, were to be redeemed by the future employment for the good of the nation and the welfare of the king, of the excellent abilities the Duc d'Orleans really possessed.

On the 12th of September the youthful Louis XV. was brought from Vincennes to Paris, for the formality of giving his *viva voce* assent, before the assembled *Grand' chambre*, to the acts done in his name by the regent. Vast was the throng that greeted the first public

appearance of this one remaining blossom of royalty. He was attended by those serious and elderly grandees of the *vieille cour*, appointed to their several posts by the late king, and who could not be superseded by the regent without giving colour to suspicions, still current in some quarters, of his designs on the young king's life. On the arrival of Louis XV. and his suite, the Duc de Fresme, Grand Chamberlain, took the child in his arms, carried him to the throne, and placed him there on a cushion. At the foot of the throne sat the Duchesse de Ventadour, *la grande gouvernante*, stiff and formal, and arrayed in heavy mourning robes of black and violet velvet, and a long veil of black crape. The duchess represented on this occasion a queen-mother. Before taking her seat, she announced to the assembled Parliament that the chancellor would inform them of the will and intention of his majesty. His little majesty's mourning garb was of violet cloth; a full plaited tunic, and jacket with hanging sleeves, lined with black satin and edged with gold fringe. His auburn hair floated over his shoulders in natural curls. A little violet crape cap, with a lining of gold tissue, covered his head, and on his neck, suspended by a blue riband, were the crosses of the

Orders of St. Louis and of the St. Esprit—decorations he seemed greatly to admire, and to be very proud of. His leading strings were crossed back over his chest and shoulders. They were of gold cloth, with small pearls worked in, and were worn to indicate the childhood of the Ruler of France, rather than for use. For he was five years of age, and although very delicate, and reared hitherto only by extraordinary care and attention, "*il courait,*" as was observed, "*comme un Basque.*" He was perfectly well formed, too, though, as a print of the time shows, he had been bandaged and strapped up, as poor infants in those days were wont to be, and to which the prevalence of deformity and stunted growth were in a great degree due. Louis XV. was a beautiful child. His deep blue eyes had a rather melancholy, appealing expression, and an earnestness in their gaze, which inspired an interest in him.

On the occasion of this first *lit-de-justice* held in his name, the child-king, reclining on his cushion, observed with amazement all that took place. With a profoundly attentive, but somewhat puzzled, air, he listened to the speeches and harangues that were addressed to him, and the oaths of fidelity that followed. He was begin-

ning to show signs of weariness and impatience, when the dignitaries of the Church then present greatly attracted his notice : perhaps because of their magnificent vestments, point-lace, gold crosses, and robes of scarlet and violet ; but the especial fascination was the red hat of the Archbishop of Paris, Cardinal de Noailles.

The Maréchal Duc de Villeroi—he who so signally failed when commanding the armies of France to evince any of the qualities of a great general—was one of the most finished and stately of the circle of courtiers who had surrounded Louis XIV. He now held the office of governor to the young king, and in that capacity stood by his side near the throne. Shocked at the persistency with which his royal charge continued, with a long, fixed stare, to regard the cardinal archbishop, he endeavoured to divert his attention from him. But all in vain. He heeded not his governor's whispered reproofs, his admonitory shakings of the head, the great eyes he made, and other deprecatory signs of amazement. Meeting at last the maréchal's angry glances, the child replied to them by bursting into tears, stretching out his arms to his *gouvernante*, and calling out lustily to the maréchal, "*Laissez moi faire; laissez moi, donc!*"

—"leave me alone; I will do as I like." So that the first public utterance of this baby-king embodied, as was then remarked, the fundamental law and the principal maxim of absolute hereditary monarchy.

This little outburst of temper and feeling brought the business of the *lit-de-justice* speedily to a close. The royal assent was *supposed* to be given to the proceedings of the *séance;* for no coaxings could prevail on his majesty to utter, as entreated, the simple word "*Oui.*" He had expended his energy in asserting his right to stare at his archbishop as earnestly and as long as he pleased. It was now his good pleasure to show his firmness by silence. So the Assembly submitted to accept silence for assent, and at once broke up.

The health of the hope of the nation must not be risked by needlessly fretting him. It was, indeed, almost too jealously watched over, and the child shielded with unslumbering care from the possible approach of harm by the Maréchal de Villeroi.

Between him and the regent the strongest antipathy existed; and the latter was glad to seize the opportunity of commenting very openly on the duke's injudicious severity, as

he termed it, in publicly reprimanding his youthful charge for a childlike and inoffensive act. Three years had scarcely elapsed since the regent had been hooted through the streets, mud and stones thrown into his carriage, and an attempt made to force an entrance into the Palais Royal. The nation at large execrated him as the suspected poisoner of the young Duke and Duchess of Burgundy and their son. Now, he was overwhelmed with the applause of the *Grand' chambre*, and returned to the Palais Royal amidst the acclamations of an enthusiastic people, who hailed him as their liberator, and the expected restorer of peace and prosperity to France.

CHAPTER III.

The Regency.—Its Libertinage.—The Regent's Roués.—Seeking Interviews with Satan.—Madame Lucifer.—Madame, the Regent's Mother.—Audacity of Voltaire.—Character of the Regent.—"Un Fanfaron de Vices;"—Yet Generally Popular.—The Regent's Gallantry.

THE Regency has been called "*La Fronde des mœurs légères.*" The epithet is euphonious. It, however, but inadequately describes that state of moral corruption which, from its centre—the depraved court of the regent—spread to the social circles of the *haute noblesse*, infected the society of the upper *bourgeoisie*, and exercised a baneful influence on the French people generally. Scarcely was France freed from the severe restraint which the despotic will of a single man had so long imposed on her, than the reaction began. The regent, roused to unusual activity by the unjust

partiality displayed in the late king's will, momentarily renounced his dissolute pleasures. But no sooner were the reins of government securely in his hands, than he gave the signal, as he had before set the example, and, nothing loth, it would seem, both *grands seigneurs* and *grandes dames*—more eager for licence than the nation for liberty—plunged with him into every excess. Hypocrisy threw off its mask, and libertinism exhibited itself with open effrontery.

The ladies of the court, the elderly no less than the young, were weary of the domination of Madame de Maintenon, and had looked to be relieved from it with her retreat to St. Cyr. The continuance of her mystic influence, and of the "Système Antiquaille" of Louis XIV.—as the new generation termed it—under the Duc du Maine, had, therefore, been regarded as an intolerable infliction; even by those courtiers who were not of the partizans of the Duc d'Orleans. Many thus became supporters of his claims who socially were alienated from him; owing to that singular perversion both of mind and judgment which led him to glory in the reputation he had acquired for frightful depravity and crime. He encouraged, and even set afloat, the most exaggerated reports of his de-

plorable excesses, and of the unblushing vice that prevailed at his private *réunions* at the Palais Royal. Thus, as Fénélon remarked, when suspicion fixed on the duke as the poisoner of the Dauphin, "making credible that which, from its vileness, it was most difficult to give credit to."

Something of that spirit which animated the youthful *frondeurs* when in the moats of old Paris they attacked their less reckless companions, probably influenced the Duc d'Orleans so openly to resort to vicious courses. By his avowed *libertinage* (meaning then, disregard of religious observances) and want of respect for propriety of conduct, he evinced his contempt for the hypocritical austerity and sham devotion which veiled the backslidings of the pious court of Marly and Versailles. A servile throng of courtiers attended Louis XIV., adapting their manners to his changing moods. Their faces were often lugubrious, and their usual dresses "sad-coloured"; for, as the fit of penitence was often very strong, it became necessary to modify the brilliancy of their garments, to substitute rich embroidery for gold and silver, but never to appear in black. The Duc d'Orleans had also his courtiers; the sharers of his pleasures—his

dissipated band of "*roués.*" More than one explanation has been given of this flattering *sobriquet.* Generally, he is said to have so named them from their having, one and all, earned the unenviable distinction of meriting the rack or wheel—a punishment to which offenders of a lower social rank would have been condemned—for the many infamous acts of their dissolute career. On the other hand, it has been asserted on behalf of this noble fraternity, that the appellation signified rather a band of congenial spirits, who would not shrink from the torture of the rack, should such a test of their devotion to their chief ever be required of them. It is, however, unlikely that the duke credited the companions he had christened his "*roués*" with any such feeling, as he professed to doubt—or, rather, he denied—the existence of disinterestedness, even in the most honourable of men.

In his youth he possessed courage and activity, and was believed to have exhibited other soldier-like qualities; but the selfishness and jealousy of Louis XIV. denied him, as in other instances in his family, the opportunity of distinguishing himself. He took to the study of chemistry, and obtained by it the reputation

of a poisoner, and a seeker after the philosopher's stone. He possessed some skill in painting and music, and in the mechanical arts. "*Plus que des demi-connaissances,*" says Duclos. He had also turned his attention to astronomy, with which, as at that period was not uncommon, astrology was combined. This, it was believed, was to hold communion with the powers of darkness; to seek interviews with Satan, as some of the wild young rakes of that day actually did—de Richelieu being one of them. But their request to his Satanic majesty to appear was unheeded, and some unexpected noises occurring near the spot where their incantations were performed, these bold spirits tottered away in a dreadful fright, one or two swooning with terror.

To return to the young Duc d'Orleans—then de Chartres—his latest tutor was the Abbé Dubois, a dissolute priest, but a man of some ability, who, while tutoring him in vice, gained considerable influence over him. Louis XIV. did not disdain to employ the abbé to overcome his pupil's repugnance to the marriage he had arranged for him with Mdlle. de Blois, one of his illegitimate daughters. This marriage was looked upon with extreme disfavour also

by Madame, the Princess Charlotte de Bavière, mother of the duke. Like the princes of the House of Condé, when from time to time one of the many spurious offshoots of royalty was thrust upon them by the king, she regarded the union as a *mésalliance* and a dishonour. It, however, took place. The bride considered that she had conferred a great honour on the Orleans family by condescending to marry the Duc de Chartres. She was so haughty that he was accustomed to call her Madame Lucifer. At times he compared her to Minerva, who, while acknowledging no mother, gloried in being the daughter of Jupiter. Soon after the marriage, Monsieur, the duke's father—in whose steps the son had diligently walked—was carried off by apoplexy, subsequently to an interview with the august Louis, at which some very warm words had passed between the brothers. De Chartres then became Duc d'Orleans. His duchess, who, at first, complained greatly of her husband's dissipation, soon fell into similar habits. While Madame, who, though a little eccentric, was remarkably shrewd and witty, held aloof from the court, she yet kept a vigilant eye open on all that was passing. In her numerous letters to her German friends and

relatives, she narrated all the follies and scandals of the day, and chronicled them for posterity in her Memoires, with the same piquancy and unsparing causticity; few of the celebrities of the period escaping her lash.

Madame, naturally, was much attached to her son, though she was aware of his vices, and greatly lamented them. She accounted for them rather fantastically. At his birth, she said, numberless good genii assembled and endowed him with the germ of every virtue. One of the number, however, who arrived late, being annoyed that nothing was left for her to bestow, maliciously decreed that he should want the power of making use of the gifts which the early arrivals had lavished upon him. "*Et mon fils est resté sous le charme de la méchante fée*," said the princess; "*il a en lui le germe de toutes les vertus, mais il ne peut en faire usage.*" Her head was full of fairy tales and old German legends. She was, however, far too clever and keen-sighted to put faith in them, or to be blind to the results of evil example and corrupt training, of which the regent was so striking and lamentable an instance.

Yet it was, in some sort, true that the regent had not the power of making use of the good

qualities with which many of his contemporaries believed him endowed. Voltaire speaks of him as "*célèbre par le courage, par l'esprit et les plaisirs*," as a man born to shine in society even more than to conduct affairs of state; one of the most amiable men that ever existed.

Voltaire, in 1718, had received a striking proof of the regent's amiability, according to the notions of those days of *lettres-de-cachet*. He had just been released from the Bastille, where, for a cutting satire on the regent and his government, falsely attributed to him, he had spent the last twelve months. The error being discovered, Voltaire was liberated. While waiting in the antechamber to be introduced to the regent, who proposed to make him pecuniary compensation for his detention, a violent storm came on: thunder, lightning, a perfect whirlwind. To the dismay of a number of persons, waiting also to see the regent, Voltaire suddenly exclaimed, looking towards the sky, "They must have a regency up there to produce such a bad state of things as this." None dared utter a word, or venture to smile at so astounding a piece of audacity. The speech was immediately made known to the

regent. Voltaire, being introduced, "This is M. Voltaire who is now leaving the Bastille?" inquired the Duc. "Oui, Monseigneur," replied the chamberlain, "unless it be your good pleasure that he should return to it." But the regent, repeating Voltaire's words, laughed heartily at them, as at a good joke. Voltaire, we are told, thanked him for the good cheer he had been provided with during his sojourn in the Bastille; adding, however, he trusted his highness would not again trouble himself to provide him with a lodging. Sallies of that kind were regarded with less leniency in the Louis XIV. period.

Duclos mentions the duke's "brilliant valour, and his modesty when referring to his own part in any action." He thinks he would have been a great general had not his advancement been thwarted by the narrow-minded policy of the king, "*il fut toujours en sujétion à la cour*," he says, "*et en tutelle à l'armée.* In Saint Simon's portrait of the regent (Saint Simon, often so eloquently vituperative, colours highly at all times, whether it be to praise or to blame, yet he knew the regent intimately), he is represented as gifted in a higher degree than are most men, with

personal fascination and intellectual qualities: "*Doux, accueillant, ouvert, d'un accés facile et charmant; voix agréable, le don de la parole, en quelque genre que ce peut être. Eloquence naturelle; justesse, égale sur les sciences les plus abstraites, qu'il rendait claires, sur les affaires de gouvernement, de politique, finances, justice, guerre, cour, convention ordinaire, et de toutes sortes d'art et de mécanique.*" Notwithstanding these great talents and varied acquirements, he yet describes him as being oppressed by *ennui;* utterly without resource, and finding life barely endurable, except in the midst of those insane pleasures which he actually abhorred, but from long indulgence in, could not, or would not give up. Depravity had become a mania, whose pernicious influence he no longer had the power to shake off. Yet, beneath the dark colours in which the Duc d'Orleans so strangely delighted that his character should appear, even Louis XIV. readily discerned "*un fanfaron de vices qu'il ne commet pas,*" and his contemporaries generally have endorsed this judgment.

Such was the regent, Philippe Duc d'Orleans, to whom the destinies of France and her child-king were to be confided for the next eight

years. During those years, in spite of his depravity, and the ruinous financial schemes he sanctioned, the people became much attached to the man whom they had once followed to his home with hootings and maledictions. "The Parisians," says Anquetil, "adored him. He was so affable, so courteous, so desirous of obliging." The air of kindness and interest with which he listened to appeals that were made to him, was in itself a charm. He had the art of refusing a request without giving pain, for he appeared pained himself at his inability to comply with it. There was something in the earnestness yet gentleness of his looks that was especially flattering. The people assembled in crowds to get but a glimpse of him when he left or returned to his palace, and flocked to the theatres in the hope of seeing him there.

He was no less successful in gaining the good opinion of the foreign ministers. For, while the charm of his manners had its usual prepossessing effect, the justice of his views, his keen political insight, his ready comprehension and clear explanation of the most intricate questions of state, the cautious reserve of his inquiries, and the ease and finesse of his replies,

won the general admiration of the diplomatists. The regent, in short, had suddenly achieved popularity. The youth of the nation was with him, and fair dames admired him; for he was courteous and gallant to the young, deferential in his attentions to the elderly—even the youthful monarch (a melancholy child, an *ennuyé* from his infancy) brightened into smiles and became animated when the regent visited him.

If the Duc d'Orleans could but have sustained this character, it would have been well both for himself and for France. But strength of mind and force of will being wanting, he too often fell back to his accustomed vicious courses, and the qualities that might have made him the regenerator of France, served but to give attraction to his evil example, and to facilitate the moral perversion of all who came within its influence.

CHAPTER IV.

Un Salon très Respectable.—The Hôtel Lambert.—La Marquise de Lambert.—The Palais Mazarin.—Weekly Literary Dinners.—French Cooks of the Eighteenth Century.—The Wealthy Financiers.—A Party of Old Friends.—La Motte-Houdart.—Homer and Madame Dacier.—The Salon Lambert.—The Bureau d'Esprit.—The Goddess of Sceaux.—The Marquis de St. Aulaire.—The Duc du Maine.—A Desperate Little Woman.—Portrait of the Duchess.—Genealogical Researches.—Drowsy Reading.

THE traditions of the once famous *salon* of the Marquise de Rambouillet had well-nigh died out towards the close of the seventeenth century. Gradually, as the literary and social celebrities of that period disappeared from the stage of life, the *salons* which claimed to represent those traditions became extinct, and no new ones were opened to replace them. Those *réunions* of the noble, the witty, and the learned had never been looked on with favour by the king, even in his youth. But when wintery old age crept upon him, with its usual selfish distaste for other enjoyments

than its own, he regarded with a sterner and still more jealous eye whatever appeared to be a counter-attraction to the formal etiquette and gloomy piety of his court. He would have had the French people grow old and devout with him; forgetting that while individuals are passing away, a nation is renewing its youth, and inventing new pleasures for itself.

There, however, still existed in Paris a *salon* of the old type; yet somewhat modified—having yielded, as time went on, to the influence of changing surroundings. It was the *salon* of Madame de Lambert, *une grande dame* of the *vieille cour*, refined in sentiment, polished in manners. It was distinguished as "*un salon très respectable.*" In other words, it was not of the new school of *mœurs légères*, inaugurated with the regency, which showed little respect for the *convenances* hitherto observed in polite society. Madame de Lambert was the authoress of several works. They were written chiefly for the instruction of her son and daughter, but were held in general esteem in their day. She had a considerable acquaintance with Latin and Greek, yet was quite free from pedantry and all affectation of learning.

So long back as 1666, Thérèse de Mar-

guenat de Courcelles had married, at the age of nineteen, the wealthy Henri de Lambert, Marquis de Saint-Brés. The Hôtel Lambert, in the Ile St. Louis, then became her residence : that splendid hôtel, renowned for its elaborately sculptured decorations, its finely carved chimney-pieces, painted panels, ceilings, and staircases. They were the work of such artists as Le Sueur, Le Brun, Van Ostal, Romanilla, Du Bassan, and other painters and sculptors of eminence. The beautiful saloon, known as the "Salon des Muses," and the smaller one the "Cabinet d' Amours," were profusely adorned with works of art and exquisite paintings.* In the costliness of its furniture, it vied with the famous Hôtel Lesdiguières ; but in itself, as an artistic *chef-d'œuvre*, far surpassed it.

In this princely abode, the most distinguished of the *beau monde*, the *élite* of the *literati*, the poets, and men of science, both native and foreign, were constantly entertained until the death of the Marquis de Lambert, in

* Subsequently these were placed in the Musée du Louvre. The Hôtel Lambert was pillaged in the revolutionary times ; but later on was restored with great taste and a considerable outlay by Prince Adam Czartoriski.

1686—that year so eventful for France; the turning-point in the fortunes of the great Louis. It was the year of the "*Dragonnades*;" the beginning of the reign of Madame de Maintenon.

After a short interval of retirement the marquise reopened her *salons*, and continued to hold her receptions in the same splendid hôtel until 1710. She had made her *début* in society too late in the century to have known the celebrated Madame de Rambouillet. But she was familiar with the far-famed *salon bleu*—having visited the fair Julie d'Angennes, when, as Duchesse de Montausier, she occasionally received her circle of friends in the *salon* that had been the scene of her own youthful triumphs, and her mother's social celebrity. Mdlle. de Scudéry and Madame de Sévigné had been Madame de Lambert's intimate friends. She had known also Corneille, Racine, and Molière, and had seen Madame Champmeslé and the famous Michel Baron represent the principal characters in their dramas. She had heard Bossuet, Bourdaloue, and Fléchier denounce the vices of the age, and the *mœurs Italiennes*; and speak with a warning voice even to the *Grand Monarque* himself. In those forty-four

years, so full of incident, absolutism had passed from the height of power to the first stage of its decadence.

Owing to family arrangements, the marquise, in 1710, left the Ile St. Louis, and took on a lease, for the term of her life, part of the Hôtel Nevers—that portion of the vast edifice, the Palais Mazarin, now "Bibliothêque Nationale," which the Marquis de Mancini had inherited from the cardinal. It had been built and furnished, as everybody knows, with an utter disregard to cost; for the coffers of the State furnished the funds, under the name of "*secrètes dépenses.*" Though still superb, sixty years' use had dimmed much of the original splendour of the gold brocades, embroidered satin hangings, etc., as well as of the decoration of the apartments. But the cardinal's successors had not found it convenient to renew either one or the other. Madame de Lambert foresaw, apparently, that her lease of life had yet more than twenty-one years to run. For she thought it worth while to spend several thousand pounds on the work of renovation, and to build, from the Rue Colbert, a separate entrance to her own part of the palace.

In the other part lived the Duc de Nevers,

grand-nephew of the cardinal. He, wavering between the old and new schools, also held frequent receptions, or, to be quite correct, *réunions*, that being the term specially applied to the social gatherings of the lordly sex, while a *salon* denoted an assembly of the *beau monde*, both *seigneurs et dames*, and that a lady presided.

The extensive alterations and embellishments—the latter including some graceful panel paintings by Watteau, whose talent was then becoming known—being completed, and the marquise installed in her new hôtel, she issued invitations to a select number of the *gens de lettres* to dine with her every Thursday. And a splendid dinner she gave them. For her *maître d'hotel* and *chef-de-cuisine* were of the *élite* of their profession. This weekly literary dinner was then an innovation; but it became a generally adopted custom, dating from about the time of the death of Louis XIV. Heavy dinners, such as that great monarch's astounding appetite enabled him to consume in the middle of the day, went out of fashion; for with ordinary mortals, but to look on those innumerable, piled-up and steaming-hot dishes sufficed to take appetite away. The dinner hour became

somewhat later, and the quantity and solidity of the food less regarded than perfection of cookery. In the regent's gay circle, however, *petits-soupers* were far more in favour than *grands diners.*

It may be mentioned, by the way, that the distinguished professors of the gastronomic art, from the regency to within a few years of the revolution, were remarkable for their fertility of imagination, in the invention of new and delicate *plats.* Great skill was displayed in combining the ingredients to ensure pleasure to the palate; also, in giving to their savoury creations artistic forms agreeable to the cultured eye. Their supremacy in this respect is attested by several of the gastronomic *tours de force* of that period, which have remained unapproached, and confessedly are still unapproachable, even by the celebrated artistes of our own day. The post of *chef-de-cuisine* was regarded probably at the period in question as one of greater distinction (be it said without offence) than at the present time. For it was rare indeed that the culinary staff was headed by a *chef* (even of small pretensions, if any such there were), except in the royal households and the hôtels of the *haute noblesse;* where the professors of gas-

tronomy were necessarily of the *cordon bleu* order.

A very broad line had hitherto separated the different classes of the community. Until the facile manners of the regent emboldened audacious spirits (such as Voltaire,* for instance) to set at naught the boundaries that hemmed in the wealthy and talented who were not of the court, even the *financiers* (men such as Samuel Bernard), the wealthiest, and in some sense, therefore, the most influential class in the State, had scarcely given an instance of the presumption of setting up a *chef*. "They enjoyed their wealth at that time *à la sourdine*," as somebody has said. Banquets that out-rivalled those of princes were modestly entrusted to the *savoir faire* of women cooks. Among these, however, were a few well-trained adepts perfectly

* In the early days of his rising reputation, Voltaire, who had been invited to dine with the Prince de Condé, exclaimed, in reply to the remark of a guest respecting the mixed sort of company he had met at the table of a nobleman on the previous day, "We are, all here, either princes or poets!"—in other words, all of equal rank. It was audacious. But the remark that drew it forth may have been levelled at the young *bourgeois* poet, who, conscious of the royalty of his genius, probably conducted himself *un peu trop sans gêne* to please his illustrious host.

qualified to compete for the palm of excellence with the most skilful of the culinary brotherhood.

But to return to the Palais Cardinal. To the good cheer provided for the guests of Madame de Lambert were added "the feast of reason and the flow of soul" provided for the hostess by the guests themselves. It was by no means a youthful party. There were the Marquis de Saint-Aulaire, then seventy-five, but destined to complete his century (according to some accounts, he was one hundred and two when he died); Fontenelle, who attained to the same patriarchal age. Madame de Lambert, herself, was then seventy; and the celebrated Madame Dacier and her husband, with the Academician, Louis de Sacy—constant guests at her table—were verging also on their three score and ten. It was, in fact, a weekly meeting of a circle of old friends, who, in a green old age, still kept alive the cherished memories of the brilliant society of their youth.

It was at one of these dinners that the reconciliation took place between Madame Dacier and the poet-critic, La Motte-Houdart. The estrangement was of old date, and the incident

that gave rise to it is probably well known. Unacquainted with Greek, La Motte had ventured to put the "Iliad" into verse from a French prose translation; and, further, in the famous dispute on the respective merits of the ancient and modern authors had declared in favour of the latter. Worse still, his disparaging remarks and notes on Homer had roused the ire of the usually gentle Madame Dacier, who venerated Homer almost as a god. The presumption of La Motte amazed her, and she characterized his criticisms as the result of "ignorance and vanity, and a want of common sense." This condemnation from so high an authority La Motte bore with more meekness than he probably would have done had it come from one of his own sex. To soothe the outraged feelings of the learned lady, he even addressed to her a complimentary ode on her own great attainments in classic lore. But her indignation was not so easily appeased; and the breach between them was rather widened than otherwise.

Madame de Lambert was a great admirer of the character and talents of Madame Dacier, whom she regarded as an honour to her sex—"uniting," as she said, "vast erudition and the

highest domestic virtues, with liveliness and wit that gave a charm to the social circle." She was no less just to the merits of La Motte, and anxiously sought an occasion to reunite the friends whose mutual coldness when they met cast a chill on the gaiety of the rest of the party. M. de Valincourt, also an Academician and *habitué* of her hôtel, chanced, however, one day at dinner to make some very happy quotation from Madame Dacier's version of the "Iliad." La Motte was present. Being seated near Madame de Lambert, he requested permission to propose to her guests to drink to the memory of the great Greek poet, and to the health of his accomplished and learned translator. His proposal, of course, met with general approval. The gentlemen rose, and in foaming bumpers of the famous *vin* d'Ai pledged Homer and Madame Dacier, with great enthusiasm. *La femme savante* was subdued. And when Madame de Lambert, taking La Motte by the hand, led him to her friend that he might make full confession of his errors as regarded his remarks on the "Iliad" of Homer, she graciously consented to pardon him. It is not, however, recorded that Madame Dacier either apologized for the offensive epithets she had applied to

the critic, or that she withdrew them. Yet the reconciliation was probably sincere.

Madame Dacier died about three years later—1720. La Motte wrote her elegy, in terms expressive of high admiration for the character and remarkable talents of that celebrated woman.

Besides these weekly dinners, the marquise, every Tuesday, received in the evening a general circle, as she uninterruptedly had done for so many years past. Her *salon* was one of the very few—probably the only one—where no gambling was allowed. But conversation was to be had, "from grave to gay"—lively, but rarely severe. No set theme. No dreary discussion, as in the old Rambouillet days, on the retention or abolition of this or that word, and precise determination of its meaning for the benefit of future generations. The forty arm-chairs had now the monopoly of those subjects which once interested so greatly *les belles dames* of the *salon bleu*. The sentimental love topics of the *précieuse* school had also had their day. But, unfortunately, the courtesy of listening to what others had to say was going out of fashion. The charming talent for conversation, when the piquant remark of

one speaker inspired the witty rejoinder or sparkling *bon mot* of another, and on which a preceding generation had so greatly piqued itself, necessarily was ebbing away too. Everybody wished to be heard, but nobody cared to listen. It was then, in fact, that French women began to evince symptoms of a passion or mania for declaiming rather than conversing. But in the *salon* Lambert, manners still received their tone from the hostess; while enough of general politeness yet remained to prevent a whole assembly from talking at once, or one of the number from out-talking all the rest. It was a mania that gradually developed itself through the succeeding years of the eighteenth century, until it culminated at the Revolution, and in the person of Madame de Staël and her political harangues.

A modern writer has said that the pomposity and pretensions of the *salon* Lambert gave rise to the epithet "*bureau d'esprit.*" But this is an error. The first *salon* so designated was that of the Duchesse d'Aiguillon, the niece of Cardinal de Richelieu. She attempted to establish a *salon* at the Petit Luxembourg in rivalry of that of the Hôtel de Rambouillet. But although the great cardinal very rarely was

present, the guests felt that his spirit hovered closely around them in the person of his spies. Formality and restraint were the result. Social enjoyment was banished. The cardinal's *troupe* of dramatists and needy literary hangers-on, of course, sedulously frequented the *salon* of the duchess, and wrote fulsome verses in honour of their patron. The "*bureau d'esprit*," however, soon closed its doors, and the epithet employed to distinguish its dull *réunions* from the lively assemblages of the *salon bleu* was revived in the term "*les galeries d'esprit*," for the pretentious *salon* of the Duchesse du Maine at Sceaux.

At this time (first years of the regency), the duchess was more particularly devoted to political affairs than to literature; but when she received at her little court of Sceaux, *esprit* in her guests was *de rigueur*. They must be professed *beaux esprits*, and prove themselves worthy of their reputation by *spirituels* and versified compliments which, as *soi-disant* adorers, they were expected, from time to time, to address to the "goddess of Sceaux." And sufficiently wearisome, some of the most distinguished among them found this tax on *esprit*. The difference between the two *salons* is ap-

parent in the lines of one of the worshippers, the Marquis de Saint-Aulaire:

"Je suis las de l'esprit, il me met en courroux,
Il me renverse la cervelle;
Lambert, je vais chercher un asile chez vous,
Entre La Motte et Fontenelle."

This "*divinité*," as Saint-Aulaire elsewhere poetically speaks of the Duchesse du Maine, was well spiced with *diablerie*. She was, indeed, a wonderful little woman. That pugnacity of spirit and impatience of control which distinguished the Great Condé, whose granddaughter she was, had descended to her. Condé, in his boyhood, would smash the windows and destroy everything that lay within his reach, if rain or other caprices of weather occurred to upset any plans of recreation he had formed. Happily these propensities found vent in the destruction of the enemies of France, and the impetuousness of his character made him a hero, and the commander of armies, while yet a mere youth.

The valour of the duchess was less signally rewarded. She commanded her husband, and to her iron rule the sluggishness of his nature induced ready obedience. But when it became a question of rousing him to that display of

energy which, it was believed, would secure the influential position assigned to him by the late king's will, the goadings of the duchess were powerless. The translation of the "Anti-Lucretius," by which the duke vainly hoped to obtain the first vacant *fauteuil* in the Academy, and the completion of his collection of snuff-boxes—of which he already had nearly two thousand rich specimens—were spells of more potency than the storming of the valiant little duchess was able to overcome, though spurred on by an ambitious desire of wielding the sceptre of the regency.

However, she had recently availed herself of an opportunity of giving vent to her outraged feelings; her prowess being exhibited in making war on the mirrors, furniture, and ornamental portions of her apartments in the Tuileries. M. le Duc, who was a nephew of the duchess, having attained his majority, again applied for the superintendence of the king's education. The regent and his adviser, Dubois, hated Du Maine, and were glad to cast further disgrace upon him. The little king, then seven years old, was therefore made to repeat, at a *lit-de-justice*, that it was his royal will and pleasure Du Maine should be superseded. He was then ordered

to resign, and appears to have been glad to do so.

Far otherwise the duchess. When informed that the apartment in the palace which the post gave a right to must be ceded to M. le Duc, her rage was boundless. "*Je le céderai*," she at last exclaimed, "*oui, je céderai l'appartement.*" Snatching up a rich porcelain vase that stood too near at hand, she dashed it into the wood fire then blazing on the hearth. With the fire-irons she attacked the mirrors, smashed them, and injured the frames. Finding strength in her fury, she destroyed and damaged a large portion of furniture, dealing about blows with so much force and rapidity, that the work of demolition went on without any among the awe-stricken witnesses of it venturing to stay her hand. At length she succumbed to exhaustion, and was carried away by her attendants, leaving for the occupation of her successor a battle-ground strewed with the trophies of her victory.

This desperate little woman was then about thirty years of age. In height and figure Madame informs us she had the appearance of a child of ten. When Louis XIV. desired his son to choose a wife, and ordered M. le

Prince to give him one of his daughters, Du Maine selected the Princess Anne-Louise, because she was the fraction of an inch taller, or, rather, less short, than her elder sister. She was not exactly a little fairy thing, or miniature Venus. The not unusual deformity of a displaced and enlarged shoulder was fatal to the symmetry of her *petite personne*. Her mouth was large, and she opened it widely, displaying, unfortunately, a very bad set of teeth. But she had fine eyes, a fair complexion, and light hair. She rouged very highly, as most ladies did. "Yet," adds Madame, "she might have passed muster had she not been *d'une méchanceté insupportable*."

This malignant little sprite, when in Paris, was often to be found in the *salon* Lambert, on Tuesdays—very patronizing to the women who were sufficiently obsequious; very gracious to the men who extolled her *esprit* and paid court to her as a beauty. This was especially the case before the death of Louis XIV.

The little duchess was then looking forward to be the dispenser of court favours. As a *quasi* queen, she would no doubt have ruled the court, the camp, and the nation generally with a very high hand. But not only were these

flattering hopes dispelled—still further ignominy was cast on her husband, by the decree depriving him, though conceded to his brother, of the rank conferred upon him when legitimated.

The duke was content to retire into private life; but declined to concur in the decree, and consent to his own degradation in order to obtain certain promised concessions. He, however, would not openly resist his enemies. He is said to have feared the confiscation of a part of his immense wealth had he shown himself very refractory. The duchess was of course outrageous. "Nothing then is left to me," she said, "but the disgrace of having condescended to marry you." She thought as much of her rank as did Saint Simon himself; but with greater excuse for it. Retiring from Paris, she made diligent examination into the genealogies of all the bar-sinister offshoots of the old kings of France. Musty volumes and parchments lay open on her bed, and were scattered *pêle mêle* about her chamber. So fully did the subject take possession of her mind, that she could turn her thoughts to no other. Her nights were sleepless, and Mdlle. Delaunay, who was then of the household of the duchess, was charged with the pleasant duty of reading

her vivacious mistress to sleep. But she gave little heed to the romances and stories that had been selected—of course, for their somniferous qualities. In the very midst of some drowsy scene that ought to have closed her eyelids, she would startle her reader—herself nodding over her book—with some profound remark; showing that she still was perfectly wide awake, but had been musing only on the rights and privileges accorded to some brave Dunois, or other left-handed Enfant de France. We will leave her for the present to her genealogical studies, and to the treason, stratagems, and plots she is meditating.

CHAPTER V.

Royal Academy of Music.—Opera, Paniers, and Masks.—"See Paris and Die!"—Watteau's Early Studies.—Costumes à la Watteau.—Bals de l'Opéra.—La Duchesse de Berri.—La Duchesse, en reine.—La Duchesse, en penitence.—Le Comte de Riom.—Mdme. de Maintenon's Nieces.

"THE French," said Saint Foix, "are a singing and dancing people." Yet for near twenty years Louis XIV., who in earlier days so delighted in displaying his agility before admiring crowds of spectators, had prevented his people, as far as was possible, from amusing themselves in the same lively way. His own dancing days were over; and his religion was less jubilant than that of King David of Israel. But, "*autres temps, autres mœurs.*"

One of the first results of the Orleans rule was the revival of the taste for theatrical amusements. There were then but two theatres in

Paris—the Théâtre Français and the Royal Academy of Music. Both had met, at least for some years, with but very languid support, and seemed in a fair way of having permanently to close their doors. The Academy still occupied the *Salle* of the Palais Royal, given by Louis XIV. to Lulli, on the death of Molière. Francine was now its nominal director, though the management, since 1712, had been actually carried on by a committee of creditors. The privileges originally granted to Lulli were continued to his successor, who was his son-in-law.

But the palmy days of court favour had passed away. The receipts of the Royal Academy fell off, until at length the expenses of management exceeded them in amount, and Francine found himself burdened with a debt of upwards of thirteen thousand pounds. Three representations were given weekly, and the *Salle* was always well filled. But it was comparatively small. A very large proportion, too, of the space in the *parterre* was occupied by the free seats of members of the royal household, while the *loges à l'année*, rented chiefly by the *financier* class, were remarkably spacious for the small number of persons supposed to have

chairs in them. One lady, probably, with her enormous *paniers*, counted for three.

The city still took its tone from the court, and the court becoming yet more devout, the opera of the Academy, under the committee, continued to be a losing speculation. When ladies connected with the court perchance went to the theatre, to save appearances and avoid probable disfavour if recognized, they always wore masks. Unlet boxes and the seats at the disposal of the management were, as often as not, largely occupied by friends of certain singers and dancers, whose vanity was flattered by boundless applause, but not a *sou* was contributed towards their salaries. The Duc d'Orleans and his intimates were frequently present; but wherever they went was tabooed ground to the courtiers of Versailles.

Distinguished foreigners, and English travellers especially, in the early part of the eighteenth century, began to visit Paris more frequently than before, and of course they went to the Opera. The fame of Paris had spread far and wide as the "city of magnificence and pleasure." But, as often happens with what is greatly bepraised, its reputation was much beyond its deserts, so far as concerned its out-

ward aspect. The utmost that can be said for old Paris, in that respect, is that no European city could surpass it in dirt and discomfort, and in the squalid appearance of its narrow, dark, dirty streets. Its attractions were all within doors. The formal Englishman was pleased with the gaiety, ease, and politeness of the French. The tastefully furnished apartments must have been charming to eyes accustomed to the stiff, unrelenting Calvinism (if such an application of the term be allowable) of the rigidly-designed William III. and Queen Anne furniture.

"See Paris, and die!" the Parisians were accustomed to say. Die, indeed! What, by the pestilence, or by the dagger of the assassin —which was not an unfrequent occurrence? Better go to the Opera, and live, and rejoice at what you have seen there. For the eye was always gratified by the beauty of the scenery and the charmingly picturesque costumes of the *danseurs et danseuses*. All the world did not admire the music of Lulli. But everyone was delighted with the productions of the fanciful genius of Watteau. It was he who painted the scenery and designed the dresses. In the painting-room of the Opera-house—as an un-

tutored lad, assistant to a mediocre scene-painter—Watteau learned his art. It was there he perfected his style, after a short absence spent in the *atelier* of Mitayer, painting Madonnas, Magdalens, and saints by the dozen (then greatly in request) for three francs a week, with a daily mess of *potage* generously thrown into the bargain.

Pauvre Watteau!—in those early days of poverty and suffering were sown the seeds of consumption that carried him off too soon. Just, too, as fortune had turned so smilingly towards him, and his "Venus embarking for the Isle of Cythère" had opened for him the door of the Academy of Painting; just when his pictures and panels were eagerly in demand; when every lady's ambition was to secure a Watteau-painted fan. The painter worked day and night, but death had already set his seal on him; and after seeking, of all climates in the world, relief in England, Watteau, in 1721, at the age of thirty-six, breathed his last. His natural genius was never directed by any great master of his art. He was almost self-taught. Connoisseurs have compared him, as a colourist, with Paul Veronese. If he did not exactly reproduce nature in his tableaux, it was nature

with a difference that was at least very charming. His costumes were truly costumes à la Watteau. They were of no period, no class; but were designed in the fairyland of the artist's fancy, and belonged exclusively to the *jolies filles* and *jeunes bergères* who figured in the *ballets* and operatic *fêtes champêtres*.

What a pity that all the beauty of scenic effect, picturesque dress, and perfection in the arrangement of the operatic stage, should have been half lost to the audience by the wretched lighting up of tallow candles. When Law, the *financier*, was made Conseiller d'état by the regent, he gained further popularity with the pleasure-loving public of Paris, during his brief term of power, by substituting wax for tallow in the lighting of the Salle de l'Opéra. He is said to have done this at his own expense; but whether or not, the reform continued until the glaring, smoky oil-lamps were introduced. Some changes and improvements were made at the same time in the arrangement of the boxes, and the Royal Academy of Music entered upon a more successful career.

It was then that the *bals de l'Opéra* were established. They were suggested by the Prince d'Auvergne, Comte de Bouillon, and

the privilege of holding them was granted to the Academy of Music by the regent's *lettres patentes.* These balls, from that time to this, have maintained an evil reputation, though they were proposed with a view of counteracting the disorderly scenes which took place at such assemblies when held in unauthorized places. At the opera balls, a *garde militaire* did the duty of police, and all brawling and outward indecorum were to be checked by a rigid *surveillance.* But the regent, himself; the Duc de Noailles, Ministre de Finance; M. de Rouille, Conseiller d'état, and one or two others holding high offices in the government, so far forgot what they owed to society and to their own position, as to appear at these balls after having indulged too freely in the pleasures of the table. At the opera, the ladies no longer wore masks, but at the opera balls they wore both mask and domino, which sufficed, charitably or otherwise, to cover a multitude of sins. Irregularity of conduct, therefore, instead of receiving a check, met with encouragement from these balls under distinguished patronage. Madame de Maintenon, having heard from her niece of the *bals de l'opéra,* writes:—"*J'ai grand peur de ces bals, quoi qu'on me disait qu'on y observe*

beaucoup d'ordre. Ce n'est pas à ceux-la que le régent et ses presidents dansent."

The Duchesse de Berri, eldest daughter of the regent, was a constant frequenter of the Salle de l'Opéra. She was in mourning for her husband when Louis XIV. died, and had resolved to shorten by one half the usual period of wearing it. Having done so as regarded the duke, she persuaded the regent to curtail, in the same proportion, the mourning for the king. The tearful time of black and violet being past, the duchess, whose fancy it was to play the queen during the regency, appointed for herself four ladies-in-waiting. In one of the grandest of the royal carriages with six gaily caparisoned horses, she then set out, splendidly dressed, on a royal progress through the good city of Paris. A company of guards preceded her, followed by a grand *fanfare* of trumpets and a clashing and banging of cymbals. Great, indeed, was the sensation. Heads out of every window; women and children trooping out from every *porte cochère;* and everyone inquiring of his neighbour who this royal lady could be. Those who did not recognize Madame de Berri, supposed this pretentious personage to be the Duchesse de

Lorraine, the regent's sister, then in Paris with her husband and her husband's *chère amie*, to do homage for the duke's duchy of Bar.

In the evening, early visitors to the opera were surprised to see a daïs with canopy of crimson velvet prepared. Presently, in grand state, arrived the Duchesse de Berri. Having taken her seat, four of the ladies and four gentlemen of her newly appointed household grouped themselves gracefully around her. The rest of her suite took up their position in the pit, while her guards remained in attendance. The regent was inclined to laugh at and to tolerate this freak. Not so the public. Not so the ladies of either of the sections into which society was then divided—the *très respectable* of the *vieille cour;* the *peu reputable* of *la nouvelle.* The outcry was general. Friends and foes alike, even the loyal band of *roués*, protested, and the regent was compelled to put a stop to folly that threatened very serious results.

The Duchesse de Berri was suspected, unjustly perhaps, of having poisoned her husband; but the irregularities of her conduct had alienated from her all sympathy and respect. Her annoyance on this occasion was extreme. For consolation she flew to the convent of the

Carmelites, and spent a day or two there, as she was accustomed to do after a course of dissipation. That short season of retirement and prayer, confession and absolution, cleared the conscience and gave tone to the nerves. Erring ladies left the comfortable quarters provided for them in that rigid monastic retreat, again to plunge into the whirlpool of pleasure, with the certainty of shortly reappearing at the convent gates, as fair penitents with a fresh burden of sins to be relieved of.

On again visiting the opera, the Duchesse de Berri went incognita, in a very plain carriage belonging to the Comte de Riom, and occupied a small *loge grillée*, where she could see without being seen. She had privately married this Comte de Riom, disregarding the fact of his being a Chevalier de Malte, which he had become at her instigation, though his family had intended him for the Church. Singularly enough, he was grand-nephew of the Duc de Lauzun—still living, and approaching his ninetieth year—who, fifty years before, had privately married another Mdlle. de Montpensier. The parallel went further. For with the same harshness as Lauzun had treated "la grande Mademoiselle," the Comte de Riom now be-

haved towards the duchess. In the Luxembourg Palace, and probably in the same splendid apartment that the Duc de Lauzun had once occupied, now dwelt the Comte de Riom; the duchess being, as stated by Duclos, "*tout-à-fait esclave de ses caprices*"—just as Mademoiselle had been infatuated with Lauzun. Yet the count appears to have been a less attractive person than his uncle. "*Il était laid,*" says Duclos; "*visage bourgeonné; poli avec tout le monde; insolent envers la princesse.*"

What with extreme jealousy on her side, extravagance and free living on his, scenes that are not pleasing to dwell upon often occurred between them. In the correspondence of Madame de Caylus with Madame de Maintenon during her last years at St. Cyr, the duchess is often alluded to. Alluded to only. They probably feared to write openly; for Madame de Caylus, whose pension had been reduced in amount—like all those granted by the late king, except that of Madame de Maintenon, which the regent paid regularly as well as in full—had an apartment in the Luxembourg, which she occupied by favour of the Duchesse de Berri. One seems to detect in the letters of Madame de Caylus that much is withheld of

doings at the Luxembourg; probably because she has had a larger share in them than she would perhaps care to acknowledge.

"I hear," writes Madame de Maintenon, "that you and Madame de Noailles (her other niece) are giving suppers at the Luxembourg. The expense they involve, and the disorder, I am told, that prevails at them, cause me extreme pain. The new pensions are rarely paid. Distress is prevalent; all classes are suffering from it. Yet every day we hear that the regent has made some new gift to his mistresses, or confirmed to them some claim on the taxes. Such an employment of the public money excites many murmurs and complaints.

"The young king, they tell me, is very obstinate; but he will grow out of that as he grows older. The teachings of M. de Fréjus (Fleury) and our Maréchal (Villeroi) will, I trust, supply the remedy for it. He has sent me his portrait, painted, or rather daubed ('*barbouillé*') by himself. The Maréchal has promised me that he will not take him again to see Madame de Berri at the Luxembourg."

CHAPTER VI.

Return of the Italian Troupe.—Les Troupes Foraines.—Vaudeville and Opéra Comique.—Winter and Summer Fairs.—Théâtre de la Foire suppressed.

THE Italian comedians, since their banishment from Paris in 1699, had frequently solicited permission to return. But the king was inexorable. A piece called "La Fausse Prude," containing allusions to Madame de Maintenon and the sanctimonious court of Versailles, or which the audience had interpreted as such and received with much mirth, had given him great offence. Denial of any such intention availed not. The theatre was closed; the Italians were driven from the hôtel; the lieutenant of police locked the doors, put the keys in his pocket; and the *troupe* received orders to leave the country immediately. Venturing to appeal to the king against a decree

so harsh and so ruinous to them, he remarked —"They had nothing to complain of. They were able to return to Italy in their carriages, though when invited to France they had made the journey on foot."

However, in 1718, the Italians returned. The Conseiller d'état, Rouille, persuaded the regent to allow them to take up their old quarters in the Hôtel de Bourgogne, and to assume the appellation of "Comédiens du Regent." Biancotelli only, of the original *troupe*, came with them; for nineteen years had elapsed since their expulsion. But the new *troupe* soon became established favourites. They were not only clever actors, but able to extend their popularity (Italian being little understood by the *bourgeoisie*) by giving alternate performances of the same pieces in Italian and French.* The Théâtre Italien, thus becoming partly French, proved a formidable rival to the Royal Academy, also to the Opéra Comique.

* Louis Riccoboni, the author of four successful French plays and several critical and historical works connected with theatrical subjects, was one of these Italian comedians. Madame Riccoboni, whose romances were so popular about the middle of the century, was his wife.

The players who had given the latter title to their performances were called *troupes foraines*, and might be classed as a company of strollers, having no recognized local habitation but the temporary theatres erected on a portion of the ground where the summer and winter fairs of St. Germain and St. Laurent were held. A desperate struggle the directors had had for some years to keep the *troupe* together, and to maintain their footing in the face of the various decrees issued for their suppression. That they succeeded in doing so at all, was probably owing, as Saint-Foix* says, to the fact that, licentious though they were, they represented the *ésprit* and vivacity characteristic of the French, as no other *troupe* did, and were largely patronized in consequence. But the Théâtre Français had obtained a decree that silenced their eloquent tongues, and permitted them to play pantomime only. This they endeavoured, for a year or two, partly to evade by the comical device of unrolling long slips of paper, on which were written, as sometimes one sees in caricatures, the speeches they were forbidden to speak, and which were intended to

* "Essais Historiques."

make clear to the audience what looks and gestures, however eloquent, might have failed to convey.

But this clumsy method of giving a play, after having been once or twice laughed at, became wearisome, both to actors and audience, and eventually was given up. The directors of the *troupe* then entered into an arrangement with the Academy of Music, which had the power of suppressing musical entertainments, and for a good round sum bought the privilege of playing vaudeville and *opéra comique* during the fairs of St. Germain and St. Laurent. The new entertainment provided was not remarkably refined. But the pieces were sparkling and witty; no less attractive to the court of the regent than to the throng of sellers and buyers who came from far and near to these fairs, for business or pleasure. A thriving trade they carried on there. The good housewives supplied themselves with linens and woollens, and other useful goods, and the itinerant merchants took away "articles de Paris" for the provinces. Everything was sold but fire-arms and books; but veracious lives of saints, and accounts of well-attested miracles, were excepted from the prohibition laid on the latter. The ground on

which the booths stood belonged to the neighbouring monasteries, and was leased out by the monks in small plots. An open shop, with a small room over it, was built on each, and disposed in long lines under *halles;* the woodwork of which at the St. Germain fair was much admired for its tasteful, if somewhat rudely-executed, sculpture. At the St. Laurent, or summer fair, an avenue of chestnut trees formed a shady promenade, and the shops were erected on either side of it.

The theatres occupied a large space of ground. They were not of the travelling caravan type of the Old English Richardson days; but were built up to be fixtures on the ground as long as the fairs lasted. And as an extension of time was frequently asked, and, bringing good profits to the monks, as frequently granted, the two fairs, from being originally held on the fête days only of St. Germain and St. Laurent, now divided between them the greater part of the year. The shopkeepers gradually left to attend other fairs; but the *opéra comique* was by no means in a hurry to bring its season to a close. Le Sage, the author of "Gil Blas;" Dorneval; Fuzelier; and the witty and dissolute Piron, wrote the vaude-

villes and *chansons*, which, with the lively music and dancing, so pleased the Parisians that the audience soon became too large for the theatre. The directors, therefore, proposed to erect one on a larger scale.

The Théâtre Français, however, had experienced a great falling off in its receipts. The actors were also not a little indignant at the preference shown for this *troupe foraine*, at the expense of "Les comédiens du roi." Should Piron and Le Sage be allowed to cast Molière, Racine, and Corneille into the shade? A representation on the subject was made in high quarters, which resulted in the suppression, in 1718, of the *spirituel*, but licentious, Théâtre de la Foire. The directors appealed to the Parliament; but the Parliament only confirmed the decree. Yet, tenacious of life, the Théâtre de la Foire for a number of years contrived to exist through alternate revivals and suppressions; until *opéra comique*, having assumed "*un ton plus décent*," though none the less *spirituel*, forsook the scene of its early successes, and established itself in Paris with *éclat*.

CHAPTER VII.

Michel Baron.—Bembourg, as Néron.—Horace and Camille.—Adrienne Le Couvreur.—Ths. Corneille's "Comte d'Essex."—Baron Returns to the Stage.—A Cæsar; a Baron; a Roscius.—A Second Triumphant Début.—Le Premier Baron de France.—The Grand Prêtre, in "Athalie."—The Prince and the Actor.—"Mon Pauvre Boyron."—An Actress's Dinners and Suppers.—Results of Popularity.—Voltaire and his Nurse.—Galland's "Arabian Nights."

T seems singular that a place of amusement of an inferior grade, which, without interference or remonstrance, had been allowed to exist during the latter years of the reign of Louis XIV., should have been suppressed under the regency. And, more surprising still, because of the need of "*une épuration du répertoire; les honnêtes gens ne pouvant plus effronter de pareilles pièces.*" Its toleration at a time of supposed general piety has been accounted for as being a necessary concession to the populace, "*pour faire diversion aux maux publics.*" A sad confession

that manners, as M. Bungener remarks, needed but little change to become openly what, secretly, they can scarcely be said to have ceased to be —bad.

During the temporary eclipse of the Théâtre de la Foire and its Opéra Comique, which had proved so attractive a rival to the legitimate drama, one star of the Théâtre Français dis appeared. Another brilliant one, however, arose, yet not to take the place of the former, who was Bembourg; the latter, Mdlle. Adrienne Le Couvreur. Bembourg had made a great reputation in the course of the twenty-nine years of his theatrical career. Yet it would seem to have been owing less to superior ability or genius on his part than to the general mediocrity of histrionic talent at that period.

The great Michel Baron withdrew from the stage in the same year that Bembourg made his *début*. He was at the very height of his fame, and comparatively young, not more than thirty-nine. He had conceived an intense disgust for a profession which, however excellent his conduct and private character might be, branded him as an outcast before God and man. Strange inconsistency, too; that which, as a profession, brought a curse upon *him* both

for time and eternity, was with impunity pursued as an amusement by royalty, by *grand seigneurs et grandes dames.* They might not only have theatres in their hôtels, as most of them had, but it was permitted to them to dance and sing, and to perform plays in public, as they often did, yet without derogating from dignity, without imperilling salvation. These were things that Baron found "hard to be understood." He therefore withdrew in 1691, and left a clear stage for Bembourg.

Bembourg was one of those actors who "tear a passion to tatters." For anger, he exhibited ferocity, and stormed, raged and shrieked rather than fretted his hour on the stage. Le Sage satirized him severely. But Le Sage was an unfriendly and partial critic. The vaudeville writer of the Théâtre de la Foire, could hardly be expected to find praise for the shouting and screaming of Corneille by the actors of the Théâtre Français, who did their best to put down Opéra Comique.

Bembourg, as Néron in Britannicus, is said to have been so furious that it taxed the strongest nerves to witness his performance. He yelled and raved so fearfully, that women were compelled to leave the theatre. Le Mazurier

relates that, on one occasion, when "Les Horaces" was given, the imprecation scene was made so terrible by Bembourg's fury, that Mdlle. Duclos, who played Camille, appeared to be quite overpowered by it. She fled across the stage with so much precipitancy that, ere she could reach the side scenes, she fell.

Horace, then, descending from the sublime heights of his tragic rage to become, for the moment, only Bembourg the actor, sank thus to the depths of the ridiculous. For, instead of continuing the scene by turning the accident to account and stabbing Camille, there and then (which the play-going Abbé Nadal considered the singularity of the contretemps would have justified), Horace took off his hat, of course he was in full court dress, and politely bowing to Camille, gave his hand to assist her to rise. He was then under the necessity, as soon as Camille was again on her feet, of getting up a new whirlwind of passion, and renewing his pursuit in order to assassinate her behind the scenes. Tragedy thus became comedy, and the audience that probably would have applauded an undesigned, therefore allowable, transgression of the rules of the French drama, laughed heartily at the incident. Bembourg had to

decide, on the instant, between seeming atrocity and obvious absurdity, and opinions differed as to the judiciousness of his choice. It afforded a theme for conversation in the *salons*, and gave rise to much vivacious discussion. Bembourg was a striking example of the truth of the maxim, "*un succès peut être acquis en frappant fort, quand on est incapable de frapper juste.*"

Some months before he had made up his mind to repose on his laurels and enjoy his theatrical pension, Mdlle. Adrienne le Couvreur appeared at the Théâtre Français, making a brilliant *début* as Monime in the "Mithridate" of Racine. The *Salle* was crowded in every part, for she came to Paris with a great provincial reputation. After this performance it was generally allowed, even by the critics of the *parterre*, that fame had rather under than over-stated the merits of this great actress; and her subsequent appearances confirmed this decision.

Her voice was full and melodious; her delivery perfect. To many of the audience Corneille and Racine even appeared new, and the beauty of their language revealed for the first time; so naturally yet so forcibly were the words uttered which hitherto had been mono-

tonously chanted, shrieked, or declaimed. Few actresses have approached Mdlle. Le Couvreur in the difficult art of listening. Her expressive countenance displaying, as the speaker addressed her, the varying emotions of her mind with remarkable distinctness.

She was slight in figure, and rather above the middle height. Her eyes were dark and brilliant, and her face more remarkable for great intelligence and expressiveness than regular beauty of feature. Her gestures were graceful, and an idea may be formed of the dignity of her acting from the words of La Motte who, on entering the *salon* of Mdlle. de Lambert, after having witnessed the play of "Le Comte d'Essex," Mdlle. Le Couvreur being Elizabeth, exclaimed with enthusiasm, "*J'ai vu une reine ce soir parmi les comédiens.*" As Phédre and Cornélie, those who have most studied the annals of the stage, believe that her representation of those characters still remains unsurpassed.

At that time the *dramatis personæ* of the classical plays of Corneille and Racine wore *paniers*, powder, and *mouches*, and the full court costume of the French *noblesse*, which scarcely had changed since the days of Henri IV.

Nearly half the stage was occupied by privileged spectators, who sat on benches or strutted about at their will, and appeared to have some part assigned them in the performance. The buzzing conversation they kept up, their coming and going and changing of places, were serious distractions and drawbacks; to which was added the semi-darkness of the tallow-candle-lighted *Salle.* An actor or actress must have had wonderful talent to hold captive, in spite of them, the attention of an audience disposed, before all things, to be critical. This, Mdlle. Le Couvreur appears to have been equal to. She had also the good fortune, soon after the retirement of Bembourg, to derive both artistic support and instruction from the return of Michel Baron to the stage.

Twenty-nine years had elapsed since his retreat. Old playgoers who remembered him in those days of his prime, deplored his decision to risk the great reputation he had retired with by reappearing in his old age, and before an audience that knew him only by the records of former triumphs. But Baron was extremely sensitive on the subject of age. No faded *belle* could be more so. He would have quarrelled with his best and dearest friend,

should he have ventured to suggest age as an obstacle to his purpose. He had also the most exalted idea of his own talents, fortunately with good reason. "Every century," he said, "could produce a Cæsar, but it had taken twenty centuries to produce a Baron. For, since the time of Roscius, he knew but of one—himself."

Baron chose Cinna for his second *début*. Fifty years before, he had taken the town by storm in the same character. The announcement of his reappearance in it was received with enthusiasm. The regent was present, and every nook and corner of the *Salle* whence a glimpse of the actor could be obtained, or the sound of his voice heard, had its occupant. The French are rarely very noisily demonstrative in the expression of their approval at the theatre, when listening to the *chefs-d'œuvre* of their great dramatists. And rapt attention is certainly a far greater compliment to an actor than the vulgar uproar by which the frequenters of English theatres are wont to express their satisfaction; having probably not listened to a line of the speech that seems so much to delight them, and not always being capable of feeling either its beauties or defects, if they have.

Eagerly then, but in breathless expectation, did the vast audience await the re-entrance on the scene of the veteran actor of near threescore and ten. He came. It may be said that he came, saw, and conquered. For there was a murmur when he appeared that denoted both approval and astonishment, besides a prodigious fluttering of fans amongst the ladies. Ladies of every shade of philosophy and morality, those who remembered the Baron of days of yore and dared to confess it, as well as those who did not; ladies of the *vieille cour*, of the *cour nouvelle*, of the *haute bourgeoisie*, and even of the *petite* (these last, commonplace people who had the effrontery to appear there with their husbands). However, all thought the occasion one of sufficient importance to be graced by their presence.

"*Mais! c'est le plus beau cavalier du monde!*" exclaims the Duchesse de Berri to Madame de Caylus, as she peeps out of her *loge grillée*. For Baron, with firmness of gait, and erect as a man in the very summer of life, presents himself, as of old, with a dignity of bearing that even the *Grand Monarque* at the height of his glory might have envied.

Baron was not only the greatest comedian of

his time (playing tragedy and the higher range of comedy equally well), but he was considered the handsomest man of his day, and probably none surpassed him in vanity. Contrary to the custom of the period, his habits were regular and abstemious, by which means he retained the vigour of an excellent constitution, and his personal advantages unimpaired, to an unusually late period of life. His fine figure, grand manners, and extremely handsome face, of course had some influence in securing the favour of the ladies. But usually he was haughty and overbearing towards his own sex, who tolerated him only on account of his immense talent, which all felt compelled to acknowledge. This talent he evidently still possessed, and without any apparent diminution of the physical qualities that gave added interest to the expression of it. He passed through the ordeal of representing the haughty Cinna with an *éclat* worthy of the great reputation acquired in his younger days; proving his right still to claim the appellation of *Le premier Baron de France.* Baron and Mdlle. Le Couvreur, together, were irresistible, and the Théâtre Français flourished.

The real motive of Baron's return to the

stage was his extraordinary enthusiasm for his art. The exaggeration and ranting of Bembourg drove him frantic, and to his evil example he attributed in a great degree the *décadence* he perceived in the style of French acting. As soon, therefore, as Bembourg retired, Baron resolved to afford the younger comedians the benefit of his experience and example. Mdlle. Le Couvreur, who at one time seemed likely to drop into the monotonous sing-song she so continually heard around her, was saved from it by Baron's warnings and instructions. Mdlle. Duclos, no longer young, had fallen too irretrievably into this vicious habit to reform her style thoroughly, but she was improved by continual reminders. Mdlle. Belmond, and other young actresses and actors of the *troupe*, were similarly indebted to Baron.

In the *Grand Prêtre* in "Athalie" he is said to have been perfectly sublime—"*Aussi sublime dans son jeu*," says a French writer, "*que Racine dans ses vers.*" "He never declaimed tragedy; he spoke it, and was tender or passionate, according to the character he assumed. His voice was sonorous, just, and flexible; his tones energetic and varied. His silence, his looks; the varying expression of his coun-

tenance, revealing the changing emotions of the mind; his attitudes, his gestures—sparingly employed, yet with perfect art—completing the unfailing effect of an utterance inspired by the sensations of nature. He proved that talent, such as his, knew no limits, and was unaffected by age.

As when he retired from the stage, so when he returned, the motive assigned for it was not generally accepted as the true one. But it was well known that he was not needy. He was in receipt of two pensions, and possessed private property. He had been very liberally paid during his retreat for teaching princes and princesses to act, and for superintending their performances at the theatre of the palace of Versailles. He always went to and from the Théâtre Français in his own carriage. On one occasion his coachman and servants quarrelled and fought with those of the Prince de Conti—such brawls were frequent amongst the coachmen and lackeys of those days. Baron's servants appear to have been as arrogant as their master, and having had the worst of this encounter, complained to him loudly of their opponents. Happening to meet the prince in the theatre, Baron mentioned the occurrence. And using

the term "*Vos gens et les miens*," requested him to reprimand his servants.

The prince, one of the regent's *roués*, thought this unpardonable familiarity. He replied, "*Mais, mon pauvre Boyron, que veux tu que je dise? De quoi diable aussi t'avises tu d'avoir des gens?*" The *amour propre* of the actor must have been very severely wounded, no less at being *tutoyé* even by a prince, than addressed as "*mon pauvre* Boyron." Boyron was the original name of his family, but his father, also an actor, and accustomed to play in the theatrical entertainments of the court of Louis XIII.; was frequently spoken to by the king, who always called him Baron. This name he assumed, his son and other members of his family continued to write themselves Baron; and it was sometimes said in jest that the elder Michel Baron had been ennobled by Louis XIII. He was a tolerably good actor, but the real talent of this theatrical family centred wholly in Michel Baron, *fils*. He made the name illustrious in histrionic annals, and thus secured to all who bore it a certain degree of favour and tolerance, even when evincing but very mediocre abilities.

Baron was often well received in aristocratic circles. He could entirely throw off the

comedian and be witty and agreeable. But if he felt that he was patronized and not welcomed as *un homme du grand monde*, he could assume an air that greatly disconcerted his would-be patron. He probably took ample revenge on the supercilious Prince de Conti, if there is truth in the anecdote. Anecdotes of Baron are numerous. His great presence of mind was often very serviceable to him on the stage—for envy frequently sought means of embarrassing him, which it was not at all easy to do. His intimacy with La Motte-Houdart, whose four tragedies owed their success to Baron's impersonation of the principal characters, opened to him the *salon* of Madame de Lambert.

In that *salon* Mdlle. Le Couvreur also, as we learn incidentally from her letters, was sometimes a guest. It may be inferred from it that the "*salon très respectable*" was a less straitlaced assembly than might have been supposed. Either from a friendly interest in her, or possibly from mere curiosity, as she had a great reputation for *esprit*, Adrienne was much sought after in society, by the ladies no less than the gentlemen. She herself gave dinners and suppers, and duchesses went to partake of them. She was the fashion, and she and her

guests were neither better nor worse than the age they lived in. It is probable that the society of that period was not more dissolute than when, in the preceding century, it was *de rigueur* that every lady should have her "*galant et honnête homme*," and a train of adorers under the name of "*amants inoffensifs.*"

Referring to the invitations she receives, Mdlle. Le Couvreur remarks: "If, from indisposition or other unavoidable cause, I fail to meet a party of ladies, probably, all of them unknown to me, 'You perceive,' one says, '*elle fait la merveilleuse.*' 'Ah,' remarks another, '*C'est que nous ne sommes pas titrées*'—'our husbands hold no appointments at court.' If I do go among them," she continues, "and happen to be serious—one cannot always be lively with a number of people one has never set eyes on before—they whisper among themselves, raise their eyebrows, shrug their shoulders. 'This, then, is the young person who they say is so witty?' asks one. 'Remark how disdainful she is. You cannot please her,' says another, 'unless you know Latin and Greek. She is one of Madame de Lambert's set.'" And thus Mdlle. Adrienne found it difficult to satisfy the people who were so anxious to make a lioness of her.

She succeeded better perhaps with the gentlemen than with the ladies. Voltaire, amongst others, threw himself at her feet, as he had a habit of doing to women he cared to pay court to. She played the heroines of his earlier tragedies, and studied her parts under his direction. Adrienne Le Couvreur was really a good, kind creature; giving all her spare cash to one admirer, selling her diamonds to supply the needs of another, and proving her friendship for Voltaire by courageously nursing him through the small-pox—a disease attended in his case with the usual disfigurement. Before that misfortune, Voltaire is said to have been fairly good-looking. To beguile the weary hours of a slow convalescence, Adrienne was accustomed to sit by his couch and read for his amusement the "Arabian Nights."*

* M. Galland, the French translator of the "Contes Arabes," then in everybody's hands, had lately died in Paris. He was well known as an Oriental scholar, and much esteemed in literary society. Shortly before his death a party of young men, returning home in a rather hilarious mood from a supper, stopped, with their lantern-bearers, before M. Galland's house in the Rue Dauphine. Terrible deeds were of nightly occurrence in the streets of Paris in those good old times; and the loud knocking at the door, and the calling for

M. Galland on a cold, dark, wintery night greatly alarmed the household. His servant at last cautiously opened a window, and inquired the meaning of this disturbance, and who the nocturnal rioters were. They want M. Galland, they tell him. Presently Galland appears at the window in nightcap and dressing-gown. "*Eh bien, messieurs, que desirez vous?*" he inquires of these noisy visitors. Parodying the phrase with which he begins each of the thousand and one chapters of the "Arabian Nights," they reply, "M. Galland, *si vous ne dormez pas, faites nous quelques-uns de ces contes que vous savez.*" M. Galland's window is immediately closed with a bang, and the young men, having had their foolish joke out, reassemble their lantern-bearers and depart. The misfortune was that M. Galland was not very well, and the chill he got by being roused from his bed on a cold January night, if it did not actually cause his death, was supposed to have hastened it, as he died very soon after, probably a victim to the fame of his book.

CHAPTER VIII.

Racine's Academic Address.—A Political Intrigante.—The Spanish Plot.—Arrest of La Duchesse du Maine.—Confessions and Apologies.—A Traitor in the Camp.—A General Lover.—The Eye's Eloquence.—A Persevering Lover.—Results of Gallantry.—La Duchesse de Richelieu.—The Duc de Modena.—A Desponding Bride.—A Heartless Lover.—A Learned Academician.—A Noble Badaud.

HERE is perhaps no period of French history of which it is more difficult to give, in a very succinct form, a clear idea of the general state of society, than that of the regency of Philippe, Duc d'Orleans. It was a period crowded with incidents, various as numerous. It was the awakening from torpor and gloom to a life of unrestrained gaiety, folly, and vice, and the re-establishing of society under new forms. Political intrigue then found a home in the *salons*, whence it had been banished since the time of the Fronde, but where now the *esprit philosophique* began also to develop

itself. Montesquieu had published his *spirituel* satire, the "Lettres Persanes;" and the influence of Voltaire's sarcastic pen was beginning to be felt. Literature, which under Louis XIV. confined itself chiefly to gathering laurels in the fields of poesy and the drama, now ventured on assailing the government.

When Racine was installed in his academic arm-chair, he told his learned *confrères*, in his discourse on that occasion, that their greatest incentive to diligent continuance of their efforts to perfect the French language should be to make it more and more worthy to celebrate the praises of Louis XIV. One is pained to know that so great a genius could thus servilely abase himself, and that he could suggest no worthier theme for a language he had so nobly and eloquently otherwise employed. Voltaire might well say, "*Racine n'etait pas aussi philosophe que grand poète.*"

The philosophers of the new republic of letters took a far different view of the subjects best suited for the display of French eloquence, as well as of their own position in the social scale. They no longer cared to seek the patronage of the *beau monde*. Rather they stood aloof, and held *réunions* amongst them-

selves, claiming, as *savants and philosophers*, to be received as a distinguished section of society. Such consideration can hardly be said to have been already accorded to Voltaire; but by audacity, tact, and talent he had conquered it for himself. Many prejudices had yet to be overcome before rank and wealth could receive literary distinction as its equal. But the barriers fell by degrees before the teachers of new doctrines, and the spread of new opinions—destined by-and-by entirely to overturn the old organization of things.

Chief among female political *intrigantes* of this period was the Duchesse du Maine. That she, a princess of the blood, should have wedded a man contented to sit quietly down to his studies, and to the collecting of *objets d'art* under the stigma of degraded rank, was a burning thought to this high-souled little woman. The receptions at Sceaux; the private theatricals, in which she figured with so much *éclat;* the madrigals addressed to her, sung or recited in her honour;—all were now powerless to charm. Her *salon* in Paris became the resort of all who thought they had cause to complain of the government of the regency. The disaffected formed a nume-

rous party, and to further their own views lent their aid to the furtherance of the scheme of the duchess. The result was the so-called Spanish plot. Its object was to induce Philip V. to invade France, to secure, if possible, the person of the Duc d'Orleans, to claim the regency of the kingdom himself, and of course reinstate the duchess in all those rights and privileges of royal rank she had been deprived of.

Great pains were taken to conceal this stratagem from the duke; and as his attention was absorbed by literary pursuits, and love of retirement often took him from Paris to Sceaux, it was not difficult to do so. The scheme was well on its way towards realization. The Spanish ambassador, Prince de Cellamare, and Philip's first minister, Cardinal Alberoni, were deeply engaged in it. Philip himself, more frequently mad than sane, liked the idea of being regent of that France he loved so much. In his fits of despondency he regarded himself as a usurper of the Spanish throne, lamented his expatriation, often determined to abdicate, and always cherished the hope of revisiting France.

But if the Duc du Maine's eyes were sealed, other and more vigilant ones were open. *Es-*

pionnage was the rule of the French Government. It was the only duty the police executed with regularity and perseverance. Le Comte d'Argenson (to whom the *sobriquet* of "*Le Damné*" was given, because of his repulsive countenance) had for nineteen years been at the head of the department, and had trained his secret agents to an extraordinary degree of perfection. The eyes of Hérault, his successor, had been for some time on the duchess. Part of her secret had transpired in the *salon* of Madame de Tencin, an *intrigante* also, and *amie intime* of Dubois—no longer Abbé, but, to the disgrace of the regent, elevated to the Archbishopric of Cambrai, and now Minister of Foreign Affairs. The unusual stir at the Embassy, occasioned by the despatching of emissaries to the Spanish Court, was also remarked by the vigilant lieutenant de police. A seizure of papers took place, and one of the messengers was stopped at Poitiers. On the 29th of December, 1718, the duchess, to her dismay, was arrested in Paris, and conveyed to the citadel of Dijon. The duke was found very harmlessly occupied in his study at Sceaux, but was sent to the Château de Dourlens. Mdlle. Delaunay shared the prison of the duchess, and several

other members of the duke's household, as well as some military partizans of Spain, were confined in the Bastille.

This "*abominable conspiration*"—thus it was proclaimed throughout the land—ended in "confessions and apologies" on the part of the duchess, who, after two years' imprisonment, was allowed to return to Sceaux. It was vainly sought to inculpate the duke, much as the regent and M. le Duc desired it. The latter especially is said to have felt towards him "an antipathy like that which some persons have for certain reptiles or species of vermin." Against their will, then, he also was liberated, and without any restriction as to his place of residence. But he refused to join the duchess at Sceaux; resenting, as much as it was in his apathetic nature to resent, the two years' imprisonment to which her schemes had subjected him.

But the little duchess on this point would not give way; though the duke held out for some time against both her commands and entreaties. He had, however, been accustomed to obey; and as she had resolved on having him back at Sceaux, which was his favourite retreat, he at last yielded to her wishes and returned. She also succeeded in making her peace with

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the regent, who good-naturedly assured her that he would forget altogether what had passed.

There yet remained, however, one culprit in the Bastille—one who had been so deeply and treasonably concerned in this terrible plot that the regent declared he must lose his head. "He has done enough," he exclaimed, "to forfeit four heads if he had them!"

"Four of the handsomest heads in France have not the beauty of his one!" was the energetic reply. Surely such nonsense could have been uttered only by a very young lady.

But the regent was by no means moved by it to pity. "Handsome or not," he said, "it is owned by a worthless person—a disturber of the peace of the kingdom, and a traitor to his country." If he had added, "He has supplanted me in the good graces of several of the *belles dames* of the court," he would have revealed what stung him to the quick in this gentleman's behaviour quite as much as the part he had taken in the Spanish affair. It was, however, no less an affair of treason than the having promised Cardinal Alberoni to deliver Bayonne, where this officer's regiment was in garrison, into the hands of the Spanish troops, should Philip determine to invade France.

This *beau cavalier*, now in the Bastille for the third time, was no other than the young Duc de Richelieu. He is said to have joined the duchess's party from annoyance that no influential post in the government had yet been given to him. But the regent disliked him, and Richelieu took his revenge by making a point of stepping in between him and his mistresses. He had not the power of conferring titles upon them and extensive estates, or of making over to their use certain items of the taxes; but he had the advantage of being but twenty-three, while the regent was forty-six. He was exceedingly handsome, too, and very seductive, but perfectly heartless and thoroughly unprincipled. He squandered his income freely enough, and, though without a particle of feeling, he could assume with success the *rôle* of the despairing, passionate lover.

He had succeeded not long before in gaining, clandestinely, of course, the affections of Mdlle. de Charolais, sister of Monsieur le Duc; and his conquests in the royal houses he greatly piqued himself upon. She was very young and exceedingly pretty. Her eyes were beautiful, and so remarkably lustrous that she was recognized by them when wearing a mask. Mdlle.

de Valois, one of the regent's daughters, a very handsome girl, had also attracted him greatly, when she made her *début* at a court ball given to celebrate the visit to Paris of the Duchesse de Lorraine. The young duke was almost in love with her; he decidedly admired her, and determined she should know it. It was difficult. But that gave zest and piquancy to his purpose. It had been difficult to make Mdlle. de Charolais understand that her smile or frown was life or death to him. He was an adept in that "eloquence, twin-born of thought," the eloquent language of the eyes. But so was the keen-sighted Madame de Prie, the "*amie intime*," as it was customary to say, of M. le Duc; and any openly-displayed attentions to Mdlle. de Charolais would have been very unceremoniously resented by her brother.

But Richelieu had evaded suspicion, and won the young princess's heart. He has now a new conquest to achieve, many obstacles to overcome. Mdlle. de Valois has elderly and careful attendants, and appears to be vigilantly guarded. From this circumstance, it may be observed, *en passant*, one is willing to believe that the conduct and character of the regent's daughters have usually been described with

much exaggeration. Mere folly, doubtless, has frequently been magnified into vice, owing to the unfortunate mania that prevailed in the court of the regent, and far beyond that circle, of assuming an air of reckless depravity as a protest against the hypocritical piety of the old court of Versailles.

But to return to Richelieu. To accomplish his object, he had to bribe, to persuade, to make love to serving-women; to assume numerous disguises; to write, or to get written, *billets-doux*—tender, imploring, passionate, despairing—and to tax his poor brain to invent methods for their safe delivery to the princess. At every court fête, ball, or concert, the Duc de Richelieu was sure to be present; but not always Mdlle. de Valois. Though she now comprehended that the perfumed *billets* which reached her hands hidden in roses or other flowers—so frequently lying on her *escritoire*, her *tapisserie*, or *toilette*, and placed there she knew not how—were missives from the handsome young duke, whose despairing, languishing gaze she so often encountered, and replied to with a burning blush.

At length an interview took place. The lovers met in the apartment of one of the officials

of the household, whose services Richelieu had secured. Many stolen meetings followed; the duke always in some new disguise. The jealous suspicions of Mdlle. de Charolais, however, led to the discovery of this intimacy.

Richelieu had but recently left the Bastille after a three weeks' detention there; the cause of his imprisonment being a desperate encounter with swords between him and the Comte de Gare—at mid-day, in Paris, in the Rue St. Thomas du Louvre—the result of a violent quarrel concerning an affair of gallantry. It happened at that time that the King of Sardinia made proposals for the hand of Mdlle. de Valois. It was therefore desirable, as the regent was willing to accede to them, to hush up the princess's love affair. Richelieu, in consequence, escaped another visit to the Bastille, but was ordered to join his regiment at Bayonne. Madame, however, in her correspondence with the German courts, related the incident. It was repeated, commented upon, and exaggerated, until the tale reached Piedmont, and with all its additions and embellishments came to the ears of the Sardinian king, who forthwith hastened to withdraw his proposal of marriage.

The regent was naturally much incensed,

and it being immediately afterwards discovered that Richelieu was implicated in the Spanish plot, his arrest was ordered, and for the third time he took up his quarters in the Bastille. Worse than that, he must lay his handsome head on the block—for the regent has vowed he shall lose it.

Mdlle. de Valois is in despair; she is devotedly attached to him. Mdlle. de Charolais the same. But who shall write the list of ladies, noble if not royal, beautiful if not noble, who with sighs and tears ask the life of this gay Lothario. Even the duchess entreats—the wife whose very existence he determined (and has kept his determination) systematically to ignore, from the day, when but a boy of fourteen, his father injudiciously married him to her. She was Mdlle. de Noailles, a young lady some few years his senior; very plain-faced and very sedate. She was to check the exuberant spirits of her wild young husband, who already gave promise of becoming the greatest libertine of the age. The bride was eighteen, *petite*, and in appearance younger than De Fronsac (his title at that time). He was tall for his age, well grown and handsome. He had probably forgotten his wife's existence when she visited him in the

Bastille, eight years after their marriage. No other lady was allowed to see him ; all applicants for that favour were sternly refused. She however came as a surprise upon him; her folly in displaying so much interest in his fate diverting him greatly.

It is doubtful whether the regent could, with impunity have sent this *grand seigneur* to the scaffold. More likely a *lettre-de-cachet* would have banished him to his estates. But fortune again smiled upon him. Mdlle. de Valois continued to weep and lament, and on her knees to implore her father to pardon and release her lover. The regent was annoyed at this importunity, and angrily desired her to desist. But another suitor soon appeared on the scene, the Duc de Modena, who had sent a special envoy to ask Mdlle. de Valois in marriage. Of this the regent took advantage. He was anxious to marry this daughter, and having missed the queenly diadem, he resolved that she should wear the ducal one. The duke having sent his portrait—which, though probably flattered, was by no means attractive—the regent presented it to the lady. She refused to look at it, or to hear the word marriage mentioned. The regent calmly replied that the pardon and

immediate release of Richelieu depended on her promise to accept the Duc de Modena.

She caught at the words, "to save her lover's life she would gladly give her own. She would make even a greater sacrifice, she would marry the duke." Instantly she gave her promise; exacted her father's; turned her eyes on the frowning brow of the portrait, and swooned.

The regent, in this instance, faithfully kept his word; for Richelieu was walking about Paris the next evening. Some few days after, the ceremony of the marriage, by proxy, took place at the Palais Royal. The regent was anxious to conclude the arrangements, the bride being in a very desponding state of mind. The first feelings of enthusiasm having calmed down, her grief became excessive. The preparations for her marriage and departure for Italy filled her with terror, and she would take no part in them.

"On the day," says a contemporary memoir, "that Mdlle. de Valois was united by proxy to the Duc de Modena, her appearance was that of a victim led to the sacrifice. Pale, trembling and tearful, she excited the utmost sympathy; while, to add to her distress, prominently

placed amongst the guests stood the Duc de Richelieu." The regent had had the cruelty to invite him, and he the heartlessness to attend. Beside him was Mdlle. de Charolais, with whom, apparently unmoved, he occasionally laughed and conversed, both of them observing the bride with a critical eye.

False sentimentality had not yet come into fashion, and real emotion was not easily excited amongst the gay company assembled to witness the bridal ceremony. But the story of the victim and her seducer, though hushed up, and all mention of it carefully suppressed, was well known to everyone present. Richelieu's air of bravado inspired, therefore, general contempt. The Duchesse de Modena and Mdlle. de Charolais, later in life more thoroughly understood the character of the man who had deceived them both, and both learned to despise him. His *triste* celebrity, however, suffered not from such passing clouds, but rather increased than diminished.

Not long before this marriage took place, even Madame de Maintenon, writing from St. Cyr, and referring to Richelieu, calls him "*mon favori.*" She says also "*Les vauriens ne me deplaisent pas toujours;* but she adds, "*pourvu*

qu'ils n'aillent pas jusqu'au vice, et au manquement d'honneur." Richelieu had certainly long before passed from the scapegrace state to that of vice and dishonour.

From some inexplicable motive, he aspired at this time to an academic arm-chair, and in the course of the next year, being not yet twenty-four, a vacancy occurring, he was elected to fill it, "never having written," says Duclos, "anything but a few *billets-doux*." Through what powerful female influence he obtained that honour is not stated. It may have gratified his vanity to have a seat amongst the Forty, but it must have been singular to hear one of the professed guardians of the purity of the French language talk like an illiterate *badaud* or Parisian cockney. It was the fashion to do so at the *réunions* of the dissolute young men of the regency, and none had cultivated this unenviable accomplishment more sedulously than the Duc de Richelieu.

V'nez donc M'sieux; v'la quéques Louis. Faut met' ça dans sa poche; faut pas l'renfermer dans l'secrétaire, &c.," is a specimen given of his usual manner of speaking. But this is probably a libel. Sentimental love-making could never have thus been carried on. It

might have succeeded with the *grisettes*, and been assumed when masked, as well as have diverted both him and his wild companions to talk in that fashion at their nocturnal revels, *et v'là tout.* Yet it has been asserted that Richelieu had so thoroughly contracted this habit that he could never entirely divest himself of it—the *badaud* would peep out, and often when least desired.

CHAPTER IX.

Une Négligée—Louis XV.—The Financier's Wife.—A Fashionable Financier.—The Vicomte and Vicomtesse de F——.—John Law.—La Banque du Roi.—The Mississippi Company.—The Rue Quincampoix.—Cupidity and Despair.—Grand Hôtels and Opera Boxes.—The Courtiers Pay their Debts.—The "Regent" and the "Sancy."—The First Blow to the Système.—Deceived and Ruined.—Law escapes to Flanders.—A Change from Paris to Brussels.—Order out of Disorder.

N a splendidly furnished apartment in one of the hôtels of the Place Vendôme sit a lady and gentleman, taking their morning meal—a substantial repast, less of a French than a Scotch breakfast. The now fashionable coffee-pot is there, prominently in the centre of the table. The Parisians have been a long time making up their minds whether to accept or reject coffee. But merit has prevailed over prejudice. The Vicomte de Béchamel, the regent's *maître d'hotel*, has already placed on his *menus, café noir, en petites tasses*, for Palais Royal dinners. The ladies have

also discovered that it is excellent *au lait*, and are falling into the habit of sipping their cup of coffee in the morning. Madame de Sévigné, therefore, in her double prediction that both coffee and the plays of Racine were destined to pass out of favour after a very short reign, has proved a false prophetess.

But the lady and gentleman have finished their breakfast. The lady wears an elaborately embroidered *négligée* of Indian muslin, with *falbalas* of fine lace, the finest that Valenciennes can produce. It is looped up with rose-coloured ribands; the white silk petticoat has a broad border of rose colour; the dress, a long flowing sash of the same; and the whole is displayed over a *panier* of ample size. She has a *mouche* on the left cheek, another on her chin, and a third on the right temple—those little black patches, you know, that the Duchesse du Maine has just brought into vogue again. There is a *soupçon* of powder in her hair; her *coiffe* is of fine lace, with rose-coloured silk lappets; her *mitaines* are lace, and her high-heeled slippers rose-coloured silk, embroidered in white and frilled with Valenciennes.

The lady is by no means the *grande dame* one might suppose her to be, though she is

accustomed to give herself very grand airs. Her elegant *toilettes*, luxurious surroundings, her half-dozen châteaux, comtés, and marquisates, have all been so recently showered upon her, that she still is not perfectly at ease under them. To be borne with dignity, these things need "the aid of use," as Shakespeare says of "our new clothes, that cleave not to their mould without." Yet her *salon* is frequented by *marquises et duchesses*, and other *grandes dames*. Even princesses have been known to waive etiquette and peep in for a moment. If she does not exactly look down on her high and mighty guests, she contrives to comport herself stiffly enough towards them. She has been made to feel, and still resents it, that the attraction lies not in her, but in the wizard powers of her husband; that if these *grandes dames* visit *her* in the evening, it is because *he* would not grant them a five minutes' interview in his private bureau in the morning, and that there is just a chance of whispering a word in his ear in her *salon*. She is to them but a solitary cipher, adding nothing whatever to the weight and influence of the substantial qualities attributed to him. Yet her superb diamonds, laces, and *toilett* gene-

rally often raise sighs of envy, and win her many gracious words and smiles.

The gentleman so courted and run after by the ladies, as far as being bewigged and beruffled, and wearing a sword at his side, looks like a grandee of the period. Had the time referred to been but a century nearer to us, one might, after scrutinizing his countenance, have guessed him to be an American cousin. His face is so "cute," shrewd, and clever; but less intellectual than cunning. There is now a shade of anxiety upon it, which is remarkable, as contrasting strangely with the air of audacity and perfect self-possession it usually wears. The lady, too, seems troubled and thoughtful, as she abstractedly opens and shuts and twirls her exquisite Watteau fan. One trembles for the safety of those pretty *bergères*, so delicately painted on silk, with their lily complexions, their rosebud mouths, charming Swiss hats and costumes garlanded with flowers. But the reverie is ended by the entrance of a servant.

Is this man a servant? He enters with a very swaggering air. There is a trace of servitude—that is of livery—in his dress, for he wears a red waistcoat; though, for the

rest, he has donned the garb of the *haute bourgeoisie.*

"Monsieur," he says, "I leave your service to-day. That arrangement I mentioned with the Vicomte de F—— is settled, signed, and sealed, and the price is paid in *actions de banque* of your last issue. But that you may not be inconvenienced by the dearth of serving-men, I have brought here two who are willing to succeed to my place. They wait outside your good pleasure to see them."

"Can they drive well, Joseph?" inquires the master.

"They can both drive so well, monsieur, that whichever of the two you may reject, I shall take into my own service."

"And Annette?" says the lady inquiringly, referring to her waiting-maid, who is the coachman's wife.

"Annette, madame, also leaves you to-day. She is now engaging her *femme de chambre;* and should Joseph and Annette be wanted to-morrow, they must be inquired for at their hôtel, as the Vicomte and Vicomtesse de F——, for the title goes with the estates."

The lady shrugs her shoulders impatiently. The gentleman cannot forbear a smile. This

transformation of his coachman into a vicomte is his own work, and the change in his own social position is scarcely less great. But his influence is on the wane, and a crash is at hand.

He is the famous Scotch banker, John Law, who, as Montesquieu says, "turned the State inside out;" who made France, as it were, one vast gambling-house; who demoralized society, by awakening feelings of cupidity, unknown to it before his chimerical system gave rise to that mania for reckless speculation.

"*Depuis le plus bas peuple*," says Voltaire, "*jusqu'aux magistrats, aux évêques, et aux princes, la cupidité qu'il réveilla dans toutes les conditions, détourna tous les esprits de toute attention au bien public, et de toute vue politique et ambitieuse, en les remplissant de la crainte de perdre et de l'avidité de gagner.*"

Law was a scheming, calculating man, who in these days would probably be called a "promoter;" but that modern term for the successful getters-up of bubble projects was not then invented, and he was regarded as a clever *financier*. A fugitive from England for some misdemeanour, as soon as he had crossed the Channel, he became a Roman Catholic, ob-

tained letters of naturalization and permission to establish a bank. It was at first of very moderate pretensions. But a flattering prospectus invited depositors, and its notes got well into circulation. The State was then burdened with debt, and the regent was at his wits' end for money—both for his own private uses, and for carrying on the government. It was in vain that he taxed his brain for new sources of income. It proved so unprofitable an article of taxation that it afforded him nothing but the barren suggestion of giving to specie a *threefold* nominal value. At this crisis Law presented his project for paying off the debt of the nation. It was submitted to the former Contrôleur-général, Nicholas Desmarets, nephew of the great Colbert, and favourably known for his zeal and intelligence in averting financial difficulties during the last years of the reign of Louis XIV. He entirely disapproved Law's scheme. Nevertheless, the regent accepted it. He liked its novelty. Better still, he liked the certainty, as explained to him more minutely by Law, of its drawing forth all the hoarded-up cash in the country, in exchange for *actions de la* "Banque du Roi," as Law's bank was henceforth to be called.

Without attempting to detail the mode of operation in this famous "Système Law,"—of which an explanation, more or less clear, is to be found in every history of France—it may be mentioned that there was established, in connection with the Royal Bank, a "Compagnie de Commerce d'Occident," which was guaranteed to realize fabulous profits by trading in the Mississippi, colonizing Louisiana, and developing its rich mineral resources. Of the Mississippi few knew more than that it was reported to be a mine of wealth. This company was about as substantial as its bubble contemporary, the South Sea Company. But the fever of speculation excited by the desire to secure a share of the imaginary boundless riches that were promised to France, gave rise to scenes in the Rue Quincampoix, where the company had its offices, that exceeded in tumultuousness those of Change Alley and Threadneedle Street. Daily, from early dawn, crowds of eager men and women assembled in that long, narrow, grimy street, waiting for the opening of the bureau. As the hour drew on, the throng still increased, all struggling to get nearer the door. Pressing upon each other, some fainted, others fell, and,

crushed or trampled upon, were carried away dead.

This Rue Quincampoix was the principal stock-jobbing rendezvous; and as the whole of the Parisian population had become stock-jobbers, it was a very animated part of the city. "There was no longer either business or society in Paris," says a French writer. "The workman, the tradesman, the magistrate, the man of letters, concerned themselves only with the rise and fall in *actions;* the news of the day being their losses and gains. Nowhere was there any other subject of conversation, or any other gambling than gambling in *actions.*" Enormous fortunes were made so rapidly that a frenzy for acquiring wealth, difficult to describe, took possession of every one's mind. Many who began their speculations with a single *billet d'état* of five hundred francs, by taking advantage of the constant fluctuation in the value of specie, *actions de banque, billets d'état,* etc., in the space of a few weeks were the possessors of millions. "Servants who came to Paris at the beginning of the week behind the carriages of their masters, often, through some lucky venture, went home at the end of it in carriages of their own." Law's coachman was not a

solitary instance of this kind, but one among many.

On the other hand, no less frequently, wealthy families were suddenly reduced to beggary. And suicides, assassinations, and the many crimes born of cupidity and despair, were of daily occurrence. The relative value of "*actions de banque*," specie, and *billets d'état* often rose and fell several times in the course of the day. This was regulated solely by Law, attentive only to keep up the speculative fever he had created, and to draw in the cash while continuing to issue new paper. Of this the amount in circulation represented more than eighty times the value of all the specie in the kingdom.

At the same time, never had there been known such profusion and extravagance in dress, in furniture, in equipages, banquets, and fêtes as prevailed in Paris at this period. For it was not only the sumptuous entertainments given by the regent and the court circle—surpassing all that had been dreamed of in the *beaux jours* of Louis XIV.—that astonished the few persons who were staid and sedate, or that yet remained of the old school. It was the lavish style of living of those who had suddenly

grown rich; often persons of the lowest class, yet who could find amongst the most splendid hôtels of the old nobility no dwelling sufficiently magnificent for them. In this way some fine specimens of sixteenth and seventeenth century architecture disappeared, to make way for new edifices, often never begun. For before the ground was cleared, the wealthy *parvenu*, who had "dreamt of dwelling in marble halls," had been driven back, by a turn of Fortune's wheel, to his *grabat* in the *cave* or *mansarde;* or if begun, the building was usually completed on a scale very inferior in grandeur and extent to that first proposed.

The theatres had their full share of this rich harvest of paper. Never, at the Italiens or the Théâtre Français, had there been witnessed a more splendid array of toilettes, or a more brilliant display of diamonds and other jewels than nightly might then have been seen there. There was as eager a competition for the possession of an opera box as for a share in the Mississippi Company, with this disadvantage to the manager—that he could not multiply his boxes, as Law did his shares, at pleasure. The renter of an opera box had his arms emblazoned on the door. The herald-

painter, not too rich or too proud to work, had a flourishing time of it among the new nobility. For all of course assumed the *de*, and generally discovered they had a right to it; unknown survivors of noble families supposed to be extinct, being found to be wondrously numerous.

So long as the Royal Bank commanded confidence, and its notes circulated freely, the reckless style of living, and the feverish pursuit of pleasure it had induced, went on unabated. Those who, at the flood-tide of fortune, had exchanged their bank paper for substantial possessions, of course remained rich. While those who had sold to obtain this much-coveted paper, looking for enormous dividends, when the gold-laden galleons should bring the treasures of Louisiana to France, sank into hopeless poverty; whose end was often madness or crime. Rolls of the Royal bank-notes, as many as they needed, were supplied to the regent and the grandees of the court. With these they followed in extravagance the example of the *parvenus*, and also took the opportunity of paying their debts.

It was at this time that, advised by Saint-Simon, the famous diamond, known as the

"Regent," was bought. The man, in whose possession it was, had been employed as overlooker in the Golconda mines. Contriving to secrete this fine stone and to leave his occupation unsuspected, he came to Europe and offered his diamond for sale, without success, at every European court. Arriving in France, he sought out Law, who took the diamond to the regent, and proposed to him to purchase it for the king. The price, three millions of francs in hard cash, induced him to decline. But at the suggestion of Saint-Simon, Law was authorized to endeavour to make some arrangement with the owner for a lower sum. Two millions was the price for which he at last consented to part with it. But as immediate payment was not convenient, a certain delay was conceded, and the interest for that time on the sum agreed upon was at once handed to him; while, as security for the payment of the two millions, crown jewels to the value of eight millions were deposited in his hands.*

* The "Regent" is considered a much finer stone than the Sancy, which was bought from a Swiss for an *écu*, or three francs, by the Duke of Burgundy, some time during the fifteenth century. After passing through several hands it came into the

The great embezzlement scheme had, up to this time, satisfied those who profited by it. The regent heaped honours, titles, and estates upon Law; made him Conseiller d'état and Contrôleur-général des finances; though while enriching others, he had not forgotten his own private interests. But the first blow to the "système" was about to be struck. Just too, when Monsieur and Madame de Law, finding the hôtel in the Place Vendôme an unsuitable residence, were in treaty for that more commodious one, the splendid Hôtel Soissons. The offices of the Royal Bank were established in the *rez-de-chaussée* of the Hôtel Vendôme. There, speculating ladies intruded on Law at all hours—seeking advice as to the expediency of buying or selling in the course of the day—and sometimes, Mdmes. de Parabère and de Tencin, for instance, taking away a bundle of notes with them; notes that might have been issued from any printing house, as

possession of Harlay-de-Sancy as security for 40,000 francs lent to Dom Antonio of Portugal, who afterwards sold it to Sancy for a further advance of 60,000 francs. Sancy disposed of it to James, of England, through whom it came into the possession of Louis XIV.

no precautions whatever were taken against forgery.

The scarcity of specie—all pensions and salaries being also paid in paper—began to be felt as an extreme inconvenience. It even raised suspicions in some minds. A considerable quantity of paper was in consequence presented at the bank, and cash requested. The next day appeared an edict prohibiting the conversion of the *billets* into specie, also forbidding all persons to retain possession of more than five hundred francs in cash. This created a panic. The Parliament remonstrated, and refused to register the edict. Law complained to the regent, and the Parliament was banished to Pontoise. New paper was issued, but could not be put into circulation. For the eyes of most persons began to open to the fact that they had been deceived and ruined. Numberless were the expedients resorted to by Law to restore the credit of the now decried paper; but none of them availed.

The people thronged the Place Vendôme, and threatened to attack the bank. Law took refuge in the Palais Royal. "Where," says Voltaire, "I had formerly seen him enter the

saloon, followed by dukes and peers of the realm; by Maréchaux de France and high dignitaries of the Church." Now, humiliated and crestfallen, he seeks the protection of the regent, at whose hands the people without are demanding the man who has brought ruin on the nation. The turbulence of passion is at its height. But the regent, who is more guilty than Law, favours his escape to Flanders. The Duc de Bourbon-Condé lends him his *chaise de poste* for a part of his journey—he could hardly do less for the man who had enriched him by so many millions. For, with the exception of a few obscure persons who made and retained a fortune, it was the regent and the court who were the gainers. The great wealth of several princely and noble houses dates from that time.

In being thus, suddenly and wholly unprepared, compelled to quit Paris, Law was unable to realize his colossal fortune, which consisted chiefly in extensive landed estates. Two thousand louis, and a few of his wife's jewels, were said to be all he took from France with him. He passed over to England, where, it was asserted, but with little foundation, that he had large sums of money invested. From London

he went to Venice, schemed and speculated, but without success, and died there in 1729, in circumstances that did not denote the possession of much wealth. "His widow," writes Voltaire, "I saw while I was in Brussels. She was as humble there as she had been haughty and triumphant in Paris." Such was the *dénouement* of what the French, with their accustomed levity, were pleased to call "La Comédie de Law."

The State was more in debt than before. "Some swindlers," writes Duclos, "of the upper and lower classes had grown rich. The *bourgeoisie* was ruined: everyone was dissatisfied with his position, and commercial morality was at an end." To add to the general distress, inundations and extensive fires ravaged several of the French provinces, and Marseilles was nearly depopulated by the excessive virulence of the plague.

It was absolutely necessary to devise without delay some means for alleviating the widespread misery brought on the country by the exploded "Système Law." This difficult financial operation was undertaken by the Brothers Pâris, bankers, who had been opponents of Law's system from its outset. By their great

financial ability and untiring zeal, they at length succeeded in evoking some sort of order out of disorder; and in effecting an arrangement, which, if it failed to meet all ills resulting from the Système, secured at least the eventual payment of the debts of the State.

CHAPTER X.

Death of Madame de Maintenon.—The Czar's Visit to St. Cyr.—A Complimentary Salutation.—The Czar Peter in Paris.—Thirst for Useful Knowledge.—Special "Interviewing."—The Invitation to the Ball.—Effect of Peter's Visit to Paris.—Madame de Caylus.—Palais Royal Banquets.—Béchamel, Marin, Soubise.—Supper after the Opera.—Fashions of the Period.—The Ladies' Toilettes.—Les Belles Dames at Supper.—An example to the Czar.

HILE the events just referred to were occurring in France, there died at St. Cyr, in 1719, the widow of the poor ribald poet, Scarron, and of the great Louis XIV. Madame de Maintenon, then in her eighty-fourth year, passed away calmly and with little bodily suffering. Sight and hearing remained with her to the last, and her mental faculties were wholly unimpaired. To within a few days of her death, she regularly corresponded with her nieces, and with many old friends of the *vieille cour;* and her letters are not only remarkably chatty and cheerful, but often *très spirituelles.*

The supersedure of the will of the late king, and more especially the malignant hate with which the Duc du Maine was pursued by the regent and the Duc de Bourbon, affected her deeply. Otherwise she might have continued to live on for some years; though she confessed to finding her seclusion a weariness. It would have gratified her, she wrote, could she consistently have done so, to have enjoyed more of the society of those who understood better than the good sisters who presided at St. Cyr the feelings and ideas of one who had passed so much of her life in the *grand monde*. But as time went on she resigned herself to that. Her death-blow, no doubt, was the arrest and imprisonment of the Duc du Maine. She was so devotedly attached to him, that anxiety for his safety made her augur the worst. "His goodness and piety, and his having been the favourite son of a great king, were his only crimes," she said; "crimes which his enemies could not forgive him." She did not live to hear of his release, and his acquittal of all complicity in his wife's political intrigues.

The Czar Peter the Great visited Paris shortly before Madame de Maintenon's death. He had a desire to see the woman who, in the

decline of life, had captivated the *Grand Monarque*, and whose secret counsels so largely influenced the affairs of Europe for full thirty years. Madame de Maintenon consented to receive him. An ante-room and two *salons*, draped with black, as was customary for royal mourning, led to her chamber, the hangings and furniture of which were of crimson silk damask. She was reclining on her couch, supported by pillows. Two ladies of the establishment were seated near her. Her dress was a Hongréline, or long jacket of grey velvet, and a flat, plaited lace cap, under a black silk *coiffe*. Over her was spread an ermine coverlet; which may have been intended to indicate royalty, like the ermine mantle thrown over her when her portrait was painted by order of Louis XIV.

Describing the interview herself, she says she received the Czar, after the Maréchal de Villeroi, who introduced him, had left the room, without any further ceremony than that of taking off her black silk *mitaines;* this being the etiquette of the period, when in the presence of a person of superior rank.

The Czar, on entering, paid her a similar compliment, in the Russian mode of salutation.

He closed his eyes, and, with his arms hanging straight by his side, slowly bent his body until the tips of his fingers touched the floor; then, as slowly, resumed his upright position. He seated himself in the large arm-chair of crimson and gold brocade, arranged for him by the side of the aged invalid's couch, and silently gazed on her so earnestly, that, as she tells Madame de Caylus, she could scarcely forbear a smile. But as in that position he obtained only a side view of her, he wheeled round the massive arm-chair with a *fracas* that was perfectly startling, and looked her straight in the face.

He could, had he chosen, have made himself well understood in French. But it was his good pleasure to use the Russian tongue; his ambassador, who accompanied him, serving as interpreter. He was, however, so ill-qualified for the office, that Madame de Maintenon understood little more than that all the Czar had seen at St. Cyr pleased him well, and that he proposed to found at St. Petersburg a similar establishment. She replied by a flattering *éloge* of the late king. To which the Czar listened with profound attention. He then took leave with the same formal salam; she half raising herself on her couch to acknowledge it.

The habits and tastes of the great Peter were but little in accordance with those of *la haute société française.* He was very differently impressed, from what was expected, by the *fêtes* prepared for his entertainment. But what he sought out for his own amusement, as well as instruction, and which scarcely any one thought of showing him, interested him greatly. He particularly admired the mausoleum of the great cardinal, in the Sorbonne. But it was rather admiration of the stern inflexible will of the man whose ashes reposed beneath it than of the skill of the artist in the execution of the monument. The splendours of the Hôtel Lesdiguières were scarcely of a kind to be appreciated by him; though on his return to his own capital he instituted changes in his palace and in the *toilette* of his *belle* Catherine, which led to the taste for luxury and magnificence, at first rather barbaric, that developed itself at the Russian court so speedily after his death.

The Marquis de Tessé played the host at the Hôtel Lesdiguières. The Marquis de Nesle and Duc de Villeroi were appointed to meet the Czar on the frontier with a suitable escort. The number of elaborately embroidered coats,

and uniforms covered with gold and silver lace, they thought it necessary to take with them to do honour to the Russian despot, excited his ridicule, as by degrees they displayed their ample wardrobe. Each morning, each evening, a new costume, while the Czar keeps to his one plain suit of heavy blue cloth, and laughingly enquires why these French gentlemen employ so bad a tailor, as apparently he cannot supply a coat that pleases well enough to be worn a second time. Yet the example of those about him so far influenced the great Peter in the matter of personal adornment, that he provided himself with a handsomely embroidered blue satin coat. Probably he first appeared in it at some Parisian *fête*. History has, however, overlooked that fact, if fact it be, or has not thought it worthy of being handed down to posterity.

The bump of inquisitiveness, so characteristic, in its largeness of development, of the Anglo-Saxon race of the nineteenth century, could scarcely have had a place at all in the cranium of the folk of the early part of the eighteenth. Had the same thirst for useful knowledge existed then as now, there doubtless would have been the same laudable endeavour

to slake it. The most persevering and keen-eyed on the staff of "our own" would have been specially commissioned "to interview," *nolens volens*, the great Russian bear. Prying eyes would have found out for us, together with a hundred other interesting minutiæ, whether Peter took a bath and put on a fine linen chemise before donning his blue satin coat, or whether the rough monster had so little sense of harmony and beauty and the fitness of things as, with unwashed hands, to slip it on over a "false front," hiding a red or blue Jersey shirt. Compared with the seventeenth century, French memoir writers are few in the eighteenth. How invaluable, then, would the gatherings and scrapings of a special interviewer have proved at this date; one restrained by no feelings of false delicacy from turning his subject inside out, and doing his duty to his public, by telling us all things. It is comforting to know that the unborn generation will have scant reason to reproach the present one for any reticence of that sort.

But to return for a moment to the blue satin coat. We know that it was worn on that grand and memorable occasion, which may be termed the virtual emancipation of woman in

Russia. The issuing of the Ukase, commanding the nobles and court officials, and all who held any appointment, civil or military, to come to a ball at his palace, and to bring with them their wives and daughters — poor oppressed women, who, hitherto, had lived in seclusion under the iron rule of their masters—was a very happy stroke of despotism. Many among the great army of saints enrolled in the Holy Calendar, have been canonized for far less deserving deeds. To those who did not readily obey the command of the Czar—and some few did venture to evince a reluctance to let loose their womankind—Peter despatched a second command, accompanied by a menace of the knout. This had, of course, its due effect. Above all, the company was bidden to come sober, and if they wore swords to leave them at home, as all would be required to dance. To set a good example, Peter and Catherine, very praiseworthily, made a point of taking but half their usual quantity of brandy and tokay that day. Good manners and urbanity therefore prevailed; and this first Russian attempt at a court *réunion* passed off remarkably well.

Though Peter's object in visiting foreign countries was chiefly, as we all know, to obtain

further insight into whatever was likely to increase the material prosperity of his own, it seems evident that he was not an unobservant spectator of French society, or of woman's influence in it. His visit to Paris led to many social changes in Russia. It was probably the cause of his placing Catherine in a more prominent and influential position than before. It is remarkable what deference this man, so rough in outward demeanour, so innately cruel, paid to the lowly-born woman he made his wife, elevated to a throne and crowned with so much pomp and ceremony. Peter certainly took a lesson in gallantry while in France, and profited by it.

He interested himself in many things that were attractive to him from their novelty, which often consisted only in a refinement he was wholly unused to. He was obliged to observe some degree of moderation in his habit of excessive drinking, and was probably all the better for it. The little king pleased and amused him, though he was growing up a silent, self-willed child; petted and spoiled by his elderly guardians, the Maréchal de Villeroi, and the Bishop of Fréjus.

But among ladies who chiefly attracted the

Czar, Madame de Caylus obtained his highest admiration. He had heard of the beauty of Madame de Maintenon's charming niece, and had been very desirous of seeing her. At this time she was no longer young. She had passed the terrible *quarantaine*, and had lived in seclusion for some years; but during the regency she reappeared in Parisian society—according to Saint-Simon—full of vivacity, and as beautiful and charmingly seductive as ever. She bore away the palm from younger beauties—the frail but lovely Madame de Parabère, and the fair Haidée (Mdlle. Aïssé), whose history is so like a romance.

Louis XIV. disliked Madame de Caylus. She was too sparkling, too *spirituelle* to please him. He was shocked at any unexpected sally of wit, as at "*une indécence*," and the youthful Marquise (she was married at thirteen), frequently sinned in that way. More than all she inclined towards Jansenism. Even her aunt could not overlook that; she was, therefore, when about nineteen, banished from the court circle, and remained fourteen years in disgrace. During that time she turned very seriously to devotion; fasted and prayed, and became gloomy, under the spiritual direction of a Jan-

senist priest. By-and-by she grew weary of so joyless a life; abjured Jansenism, and took a Jesuit father for her confessor. This restored her to the favour of Madame de Maintenon, who then pleaded for her erring niece with the king. The *Grand Monarque*, pleased with her repentance, not only vouchsafed his pardon, but also granted an increase of four thousand francs to her pension of six thousand.

Madame de Caylus had recently become a widow—a circumstance supposed to have influenced the change in her religious or theological opinions. But whether or not, the prevailing *libertinage* seems to have had some effect on her, for Saint-Simon, her great admirer, says that both Jansenists and Jesuits were objects of her *plaisanteries*. "*La régence approchait*," he says, "*et elle y preludait.*" Yet during that brilliant period when Law's bank-notes were so plentiful, and the Palais Royal entertainments so magnificent, she seems to have been doubtful as to the propriety of joining them. Madame de Maintenon was appealed to. She, of course, did not approve the regent's dissolute mode of life; but with reference to these public banquets, she replies: "*Il faut aller au*

Palais Royal, il ne faut pas fronder ceux qui ont l'autorité en main."

Thus sanctioned, Madame de Caylus could, without scruple, take her seat with other ladies at these entertainments, to which the *noblesse* and the *beau monde* generally were invited. She even sometimes presided, "*comme une grace un peu vive; comme une déesse d'Homère; charmant tous les cœurs, et faisant tout oublier, même l'amour.*" The regent certainly set the fashion in France of good cookery and extravagant living. The *menus* of the célebrated Vicomte have been pronounced by connoisseurs in gastronomy, *chefs-d'œuvre* of their kind; while sauce *à la Béchamel*, and champagne *à la glace* are still as much in favour as when, a century and a half ago, that sublime genius invented them. The Prince de Soubise and his distinguished *chef*, Marin, who flourished rather later in the century, originated some very costly *plats*; but none of their creations have obtained such general acceptance, and so long retained undiminished popularity as those of the famous Vicomte de Béchamel.

It was the fashion at that time at certain hôtels of the noblesse to prepare a supper, on opera nights, for ten or twelve friends, who were

invited during the performance to return home with the host or hostess. Care was taken to have an equal number of ladies and gentlemen. Returning from the opera or theatre was a miserable affair in those times. The feeble gleam from the lanterns, or the lurid glare of torches, both carried by men—for, as yet, there were no *réverbères*—gave but a very flickering, uncertain light, often treacherously leading both horses and men into quagmires of accumulated mud, threatening to life and limb. To enter the *salle* of some splendid hôtel after traversing the gloomy streets, was like passing from Cimmerian darkness into the bright precincts of fairyland.

Girandoles of chased silver or Venetian glass, filled with *bougies*, are ranged on the walls. Splendid candelabra on the table, which is covered with finest white linen from Holland, sparkling crystal glass, and Japanese porcelain, or a magnificent table service in silver; vases and épergnes, filled with flowers and fruits, giving colour and beauty to the table arrangements. The champagne is ready, and the more substantial part of the supper only waits the presence of the guests.

And the guests themselves form a brilliant

show, quite worth bestowing a glance upon. The gentlemen wear fewer superfluous puffings of satin and velvet than in the Louis XIV. time. They have also greatly diminished the height, length, and breadth of their wigs. Some have altogether dispensed with flowing curls at the back, and have adopted powder and the *bourse*, or bag-wig. The late king was persuaded to try it, but can hardly be said to have adopted it, and in the size of his peruke he would not abate an inch. Embroidered silk or velvet coats are still the *grande mode;* but they sit closer to the figure. The voluminous *trousses* are entirely abandoned, except on state days, for a tighter-fitting garment, with a long embroidered vest. There is an ample display of fine lace in *jabots* and *manchettes*. Diamonds glitter in buttons, on sword-hilts, and in feather-bordered hats; and the red-heeled shoes, cut in a high flap above the instep, are fastened by elaborately chased gold or diamond buckles.

The elderly ladies of this period did not follow the changing *modes* of the younger ones. They continued to wear the plainer and more suitable style of dress introduced by Madame de Maintenon.

Like the gentlemen, the young ladies have cut down their head-dresses to a moderate height. All wear powder. It is thought to be advantageous to the complexion, and to impart lustre to the eyes and brilliancy to the eye-lashes. Pearls and diamonds and lace are intertwined with the hair. The *blondes* are lavish in the use of *les mouches;* but it is lamentable to note that snuff-taking is becoming far too general a habit, many pretty noses showing traces of it. There is, you perceive, no diminution in the spread of the *panier*, and the skirt, long and training at the back, is caught up at the side with bows of riband with long floating ends. The shoes are really artistic productions, and extravagant as they are in price, it is yet impossible to speak of such marvels of workmanship as dear. The *cordonnier* of that day (to translate him into a shoe-maker is to drag him as it were from his pedestal) was truly an artist.

How gracefully, too, the ruffles of fine *point d'Alençon* wave to and fro, as the ladies flutter their fans. "This is a Lancret," remarks one of the fair dames as she opens her fan for inspection. "Watteau, you know, has grown ambitious since the Academy has received his pictures."

"Yes, he has forsaken his shepherdesses, and has sent a really fine picture to the *salon* this season—'Infantry on the March.' But he is ill, and I fear will paint but few more."

"Have you seen the Le Couvreur in Mariamne?" asks another who has just dropped in after the Théâtre Français. "No? You must then. She is splendid in mourning. Made quite an impression. Voltaire does well to pay homage in that quarter. I am told he is constantly on his knees before her. He knows that it is Adrienne more than Mariamne that raises such a *fureur*."

Seated round the splendidly appointed table this grand company is really a charming sight. There is more talking than eating, with the ladies, at least; yet the foaming *vin* d'Ai seems to meet with their full approval. It is to be feared that it is even growing too much in favour with *ces belles dames* of the regency.

Is it not likely that the great Peter, though fond of going to bed at seven or eight in the evening, may once or twice have been present at *un petit-souper* after the Opera? He was fond of music, and the *ballet* pleased him greatly, though he cared little for the performances of the Théâtre Français.

It may be suspected that it was so; and that the savage breast of the Russian bear was subdued by the fascinations of the ladies at some brilliant *réunion* of this sort; that he then and there inwardly resolved to give the Muscóvite Court an empress, and to raise woman in his wide empire to as lofty a pinnacle as that upon which she was elevated in France.

CHAPTER XI.

The Turkish Ambassador.—The Turk's Blessing.—The King's Unwonted Docility.—The Young King's Amusements.—The King's Pastors and Masters.—The King and his Confessor.—Massillon's Petit Carême.—The Preaching of Massillon.—Massillón in Society.—Villeroi's Devotion to his King.—A Youthful Gambler.—Projected Marriages.—The Bulle Unigenitus.—A Very Vicious Bull.—Taken by the Horns.—The Marriages Arranged.

HAT does your Excellency think of the beauty of my king? Is not he charming, amiable, graceful; a perfect picture?"

"Allah be praised, and preserve this fair child from all that is evil and ill-omened!"

The questioner is the old Maréchal, Duc de Villeroi, the young king's governor, and now in his seventy-ninth year. He who replies is Mehemet Effendi, Ambassador Extraordinary from the Sultan, Achmet III. The Turk had expressed a wish to see the youthful Louis XV., and a day had, accordingly, been appointed to

receive him at Vincennes. Mehemet was shrewd and observant. He wrote an account of his embassy, and criticised, with much acuteness, those members of the regent's government with whom the object of his mission brought him in contact. He speaks with contempt and disdain of the infamous Dubois, then minister for foreign affairs, as well as Archbishop of Cambrai. "He did me the honour," writes Mehemet, "to receive me on a carpet of cloth of gold, but could not make up his mind to favour me with one word of truth."

Of his interview with the youthful sovereign and his governor, he says, "After being introduced by the maréchal, we entered into a pleasant and friendly conversation on various topics, the little king greatly admiring the Turkish dress, and examining my poignard very minutely, as well as that of my secretary, and the interpreter's who accompanied me."

Villeroi, after Mehemet's reply to his question respecting the child-king's beauty, proceeded to inform him that his king was but eleven years and four months old, and that his figure, as he perceived, was already well-developed and finely proportioned.

"Look well at his hair," he said; "it is all his own—no wig."

"And as the maréchal spoke, he turned the child round," remarks Mehemet, "that I might better observe his hyacinthine locks. I passed my fingers caressingly through them: they were like threads of gold; even in length, and falling in curls over his back and shoulders."

"'He can walk well, too,' said his governor. 'Now let us see you walk in your very best manner.' And the little king, with the majestic gait of the partridge, walked to the centre of the *salon* and back again.

"'Now, with greater speed,' he added, 'that his Excellency may see how swiftly you can run.' Immediately the king began to bound with the fleetness of a young roe up and down the apartment. The maréchal then asked me if I did not think he was an amiable child.

"I answered," says Mehemet, "fervently, as the child stood beside me, with his hand clasped in mine, 'May the All-powerful Allah, who created this beautiful being, bless and preserve him!'"

The ambassador appears to have witnessed this little farce with the most perfect gravity;

and his youthful majesty to have been more docile than usual. All accounts represent him as shy with strangers, and apathetic and obstinate in the extreme.

The Turks and their rich Oriental dresses were, however, a novelty to him, which may account for his unwonted docility, and the readiness with which he obeyed his doting old governor, and allowed him to put him through his paces in so undignified a manner.

Owing to the king's delicate health in these early years, he had been permitted to run almost wild, with the view of strengthening his constitution by much open-air exercise and amusement. It was then scarcely expected that he would live to attain his majority—his thirteenth year. But it was his governor's opinion that his life was more in danger from poison than from bodily weakness. Vigilant, therefore, was the watch he kept over those who prepared the child's meals; while his shirts, gloves, handkerchiefs, and bed-linen were under the charge of the anxious maréchal himself.

Hitherto the king had received but little instruction. His preceptor, Fleury, Bishop of Fréjus, thought more of gaining his pupil's affection by excessive indulgence, than of cul-

tivating his mind and training him in habits of industry. At La Muette—bought for him after the death of the Duchesse de Berri—there was a small plot of ground, named by Villeroi, "His Majesty's garden," which was dug and planted wholly by himself. He had also a cow, which he milked and tended. But, more objectionable still, he was allowed to mess about with saucepans and kettles, and prepare his own *potage* and coffee. Like Louis XIII. he was fond of falcons, and was amused to see them pick to pieces the poor little live sparrows that were given them for food.

Not that he was absolutely cruel. But he was of a sluggish, apathetic temperament; bored to death, even at this early age. The earnest viciousness of these birds of prey was a spectacle that roused him from his dreamy discontent; captivated his attention; therefore amused him. His natural insensibility preserved him from feelings of pain or pity at witnessing the struggles and sufferings of the poor little birds. Such feelings were reserved for himself when any mischance occurred to him. And the boy proved father to the man.

It was a misfortune for Louis XV., as

Madame de Maintenon observed, "that he should not have learned obedience as a subject before commanding as a king." But the system of education pursued by the governess, governor and preceptor appointed by Louis XIV., consisted in gratifying his every whim; encouraging every puerile fancy, without any attempt to inculcate moral principles or noble and generous sentiments. True, he was taught to say his prayers regularly, and to attend mass daily: but the first was a mere exercise of the memory, and almost the only one imposed on it; the second, simply a matter of habit and routine. One can imagine that he had heard less of the goodness of God than of the power of the evil one; for, like the two preceding Louis, he stood immensely in fear of his satanic majesty.

When he was seven and a half years old the Duchesse de Ventadour gave up her charge entirely into the hands of the Duc de Villeroi. The regent then appointed the Abbé Fleury confessor to the king. Though of the same name, the abbé was not related to the Bishop of Fréjus. He had been *sous précepteur* to the Duc de Bourgogne, the king's father, was now near eighty years of age, and for many years

had been wholly devoted to literature. His "Histoire de l'Eglise" was long considered the best work that had been written on that subject, and its style, though unpretending, natural and forcible. According to Voltaire, the "Discours Préliminaires" were superior to the history, being "*presque d'un philosophe.*" The regent said, "he selected him to take charge of the king's conscience because he was neither Jansenist, Molinist, nor Ultramontain."

He, however, lived in the palace secluded in his own apartment, his duties as confessor being too slightly onerous to interrupt his literary pursuits. It was customary for the little king, with his own royal hand, to scrawl out for himself a confession of the peccadilloes of which he considered he had been guilty. This was submitted, first, to the bishop, who, having revised it, sent it to the abbé. After looking over it, some words of exhortation were addressed to the youthful penitent, and absolution was given; it being an understood arrangement that no questions should ever be put to him.

At about this time the celebrated preacher Massillon was delivering those eloquent discourses known as the "Petit carême." The young king was supposed to learn from them

both his duty towards his people and what his own private conduct should be. The popularity of these discourses was immense. They had a vogue which sermons, as sermons, can scarcely again hope to attain. "First, because" (says that able writer, M. Bungener) "they lack almost entirely the *sève chrétienne*, and are sermons as little as it is possible to be. Throughout them there breathes a spirit of morality, pure and pleasing, but of morality only; of faith there is none. Secondly, philosophy abounds in them, and, as far as it goes, it is good and wise philosophy; but it is weak, and may with too much facility, be made to adapt itself to the ideas, the interests, the passions of the period."

Voltaire is said to have invariably had the "Petit carême" lying beside him when writing. He speaks of its author as "*le prédicateur qui a le mieux connu le monde. Un philosophe modéré et tolérant.*" The philosophers of the new school, with Voltaire at their head, vaunted Fénélon and Massillon as being sharers in their opinions and views. The first for attacking authority, by attacking in Telemachus the vices of Louis XIV.; the second for teaching in the "Petit carême," and in the name of God, that authority emanates from the people.

Like his famous predecessor Bourdaloue, Massillon did not excel in funeral orations. His great gift of eloquence seemed to fail him when lauding the imaginary virtues of the dead. One sentence only became celebrated, "*Dieu seul est grand, mes frères.*" They are the opening words of the funeral oration of Louis XIV., and were no doubt effective; those to whom they were addressed having accustomed themselves to believe that *le roi seul est grand.* For as Massillon, in the course of his oration, remarked, "His subjects almost raised altars to him."

During the last twenty years of his life, in the retirement of his diocese of Clermont, Massillon occupied himself in revising his sermons; in improving and polishing their style; and, it is said, bringing them more into harmony with the philosophical ideas then prevalent. But whether or not, as they remain to us, they are models of eloquence. Those on true and false glory contain lessons that Louis XIV. no less than his successor might well indeed have laid to heart. Another on *ennui* and its remedy, had its counsels been followed, might have spared Louis XV. many an idle hour of melancholy, and weariness of existence.

If, as is sometimes asserted, all that these sermons contain of Christian doctrine is in the text, the rest being mere moral teaching; it must yet be confessed that it is moral teaching of a very high order, and that the world would be none the worse if this mere morality, so ably taught, were more generally put into practice. Massillon was greatly sought after in society. Like so many of the academic forty, he was a frequenter of the *salon* of Madame de Lambert. His reputation was great as *un homme d'esprit*; and, though inclining to the new school of thought, in urbanity and politeness of manner, he was a follower of the *vieille cour*. He would never be drawn into a theological argument. De Richelieu on one occasion having put some malapropos question of the sort to him, he replied, "*J'ai l'habitude de ne parler théologie que dans la chaire, et au confessional. Venez m'y trouver.*"

Massillon once preached in the Royal Chapel, in the presence of the young king, his governor, and the court, on the text, "*Bienheureux les peuples dont les rois sont d'ancienne race.*" A text which, be it remarked *en passant*, has little or no philosophy or Christian doctrine in it. However, the Duc de Villeroi, who was

not only devoted to his king, but also one of the most obsequious courtiers of the old school, was much affected by the text. Whenever the preacher, in the course of his sermon repeated it, the old duke wept; his emotion increasing as the discourse proceeded.

At last, after gazing on his king with a sort of rapturous expression, as on some beautiful vision, while the words, *bienheureux*, etc., were pronounced, he, when they were concluded, pressed his aged hands on his eyes, bowed his head and sobbed. His king, meanwhile, greatly in the sulks at the length of the sermon, and unable also to comprehend the cause of his governor's emotion, looked first at him, then at the preacher, with that air of proud defiance he had from his childhood, and frowned and pouted his disgust with both. *Malheureux les peuples*, etc., might then have been presaged.

Yet one must feel pity for this orphan child —so lonely, silent, and melancholy. It is not surprising that he should have been reserved and shy, accustomed as he was from infancy to be hedged about with the same stiff etiquette as had prevailed in the old king's court. Doomed, too, to the companionship and care of those aged persons, with whom he could feel

no sympathy, and who had no tie of relationship on him, to call it forth. He was fond of Fleury, who was amiable and gentle, and whose character inspired affection, far more than that of the fussy old Duc de Villeroi, though Villeroi's vigilance was believed—and by Fleury himself—to have thwarted the designs that at one time existed against the king's life.

He seems to have associated scarcely at all with the youthful nobility; who as *pages de cour*, or *menins*, were usually brought up with royal children. The effeminate Duc de Gêvres, and Marquis de Sauvré were of the number. They were something older than the king, but their influence on him was an evil one, as was also that of the Duc de Richelieu, some few years later. Young Louis, however, was already a gambler, and expert at most games of hazard. No check apparently was, in this respect, placed on him, as he frequently staked considerable sums. He was also remarkably eager to win money, and very carefully hoarded his gains.

But a circumstance occurred at this time, which temporarily occasioned the young monarch much pain and annoyance. There had been a short war with Spain after the discovery and breaking up of the Duchesse du

Maine's Spanish plot. The quarrel being settled, the regent became desirous of marrying one of his daughters to the Spanish prince —Don Louis, Prince of the Asturias. To induce the king of Spain to lend a favourable ear to his proposal, the regent also suggested a marriage between the youthful Infanta and Louis XV., not yet twelve years old. Philip gave his consent on certain conditions, of a religious, or rather theological character.

Although "*très français*," and always yearning for his country—his possession of the Spanish crown never reconciling him to exile—Philip V. had, nevertheless, become a perfect Spaniard in bigotry. He was a furiously zealous supporter of the presumptuous pretensions of the Church of Rome to rule the conscience of mankind; and he could imagine no more pleasing spectacle to present to the foreign visitors at his court, who were of the fold of the faithful, than a brilliant *auto-da-fé*, for which there was always a supply of poor heretics kept on hand.

This, he thought, infinitely better than the ordinary bull-fights. They are apt to inspire disgust, as well as feelings of pity for the sufferings of the animals engaged in them, when

there is wanting in the spectator the Spanish enthusiasm that overrules all other feeling. But the burning of heretics had a soothing effect on the agitated mind of Philip. And in those good old times it was to many devout Catholics as the offering up to heaven of a sweet-smelling sacrifice, with the certainty, too, that it was looked upon there with favour.

Philip's conditions, then, were—First, that the *Bulle Unigenitus*, which had for many years been the fertile source of dissension in the Gallican Church, should be unanimously accepted by the French clergy, and registered by the Parliament. Secondly, that the conscience of the young king should be confided to the direction of a Jesuit confessor—the good old easy-going Abbé Fleury being required to resign.

This second condition was easily complied with. The old abbé was too far advanced on the journey of life to be troubled with worldly ambition. He gathered up his papers and parchments, and went his way contentedly enough.

But the *Bulle?** Now, this *Bulle Uni-*

* The *Bulle Unigenitus*, as most persons know, was issued by Pope Clement XI. in 1713. Its object was to condemn a small work, entitled "Reflexions Morales sur l'Evangile," pub-

genitus had occasioned Louis XIV. infinite worry of mind during the last years of his life, and the clergy of France, high and low, had been kept in a continual ferment respecting it. Many had been the heart-burnings felt by bishops and archbishops, and doctors of the Sorbonne, as on the one side it was decreed to accept it, on the other to firmly oppose it. In short, the proverbial bull in a china shop, however viciously determined on overthrowing and demolishing all the crockery that came in his way, could not have committed

lished so long before as 1671. It was written by le Père Quesnel, of the Oratoire. The work had had great success, had passed through several editions, and even had met with the approval of the great Bossuet. It was popular also with the Jansenists. This being the case, the Jesuits began to suspect, a new edition being called for after the death of Bossuet, that the work must contain some heretical doctrines. Disputes arose on the subject, which led to a revival of the Jansenist quarrels. Louis XIV. then requested the sovereign pontiff, Clement XI., to give his opinion of the work. After three years' consideration, the result was the famous *Bulle Unigenitus*, condemning 101 of Quesnel's propositions. Among them was the following :—"One should not be deterred from doing one's duty by the fear of being unjustly excommunicated." Of course no Pope could tolerate teaching so heretical as that. Le Père Quesnel died, very poor and in exile, at near ninety years of age, about the time of Philip's demand that the Bull should be accepted in France, if his daughter was to be the queen of Louis XV.

more havoc and devastation than did this Papal Bull, in the destruction of harmony and good feeling amongst the clerical party and Catholics, good and bad generally, who composed the Gallican church.

However, what Louis XIV., with all his despotic authority, could not accomplish; what the cardinal archbishop of Paris had refused the king on his deathbed—when he sent to request him to accept the Bull, and with the request made an offer of reconciliation—Dubois, influenced solely by ambitious views, undertook to effect. And he succeeded.

The cardinal, for the sake of giving peace to the Church, and putting an end to the irritating theological quarrels which this abominable Bull had given rise to throughout France, consented to accept it. Yet he did not yield it a hearty consent, but merely allowed conviction to be forced on him sorely against his will. Other recalcitrant prelates, however, thought it right to follow the cardinal archbishop's example. If in the end it proved that the Bull had only been "scotched," not killed, present purposes yet were served, and, above all, the worthy Dubois received his expected reward from Pope Innocent III.

The archbishopric of Rheims was offered at this time to Fleury, with the intention of superseding him as preceptor; his growing influence with the king displeasing Dubois. But Fleury, who had resigned the bishopric of Fréjus for that appointment, now declined to give it up for the archbishopric. Titles, honours, and large revenues were no temptations to him. He loved power, no doubt; and as he was one of those who believe that to wait and watch for the object desired is often the surest way of obtaining it, the power he coveted, in due time, fell into his hands, when he quietly but firmly grasped it.

Philip, however, was satisfied, and the regent had now but to announce to the young king the marriage arranged for him, and to obtain his consent to it.

CHAPTER XII.

The New Cardinal Archbishop.—An Unwilling Bridegroom.—A Sorrowful Fate.—The Château de Rambouillet.—The Rambouillet Ménage.

BISHOP FLEURY, preceptor; the Abbé Fleury, confessor; the Maréchal Duc de Villeroi, governor; and the Duc de Bourbon-Condé, nominal superintendent of the king's education, were assembled in the *grande salle* at Vincennes, the king being seated in his chair of state, to receive the regent.

He entered accompanied by Dubois, whom he formally presented to the king. Then informed him that to the zeal of the Archbishop of Cambrai he owed the tranquillity of his kingdom; also the peace of the Church of France—the schism that had so long divided

it being, by his earnest efforts, happily ended. "An important service indeed," he continued, "for which his holiness had rewarded the arch-"bishop with a cardinal's hat."

The king bowed, but made no reply. The old maréchal stood beside him, as stiff, firm, and upright as the weight of his eighty years allowed. But neither he nor the Bishop of Fréjus appeared to notice the inquiring glances directed towards them by the young king, when the regent had concluded his address. Accustomed to read in their countenances what etiquette prescribed should be done, he supposed, as they gave no sign of life, that the right and proper thing was to be silent.

The regent then entered on the subject of the marriage. Instantly young Louis' attention was roused. As the arrangements respecting it were explained to him, the poor boy's dismay increased. The idea of a wife filled him with terror. The etiquette always so persistingly enforced, he at once cast to the winds; and, jumping down from his chair of state, rushed to his preceptor. Leaning on his shoulder, and throwing his

arms around him, he wept bitterly, and loudly complained of the unkindness of the regent.

All present endeavoured, in turn, to console their young monarch. He was assured that the marriage itself was a far distant event; that his assent to it only was required at that time.

"*Allons donc; allons donc, mon maître,*" said the old duke, coaxingly; "*donnez votre consentement franchement. Il faut faire la chose de bonne grace, mon maître.*"

At length, after much expostulation, persuasion, and entreaty, the bishop obtained from him a tearful and unwilling "*oui.*" A short but more gracious reply had been prepared for him, with the view of sending it to Spain, to gratify his uncle, Philip V. But he refused to repeat it, and escaped from his tormentors to indulge his sorrow in solitude.

A council of regency was held the next day, for the purpose of receiving the king's announcement of his marriage. But his majesty's repugnance to matrimony appears even to have increased in the interval. It was with difficulty he was prevailed on to

attend the council; and when there, not a word of the message from the throne would he utter. Silently he sat there, poor child, the tears running down his face. And his lot, no doubt, was then felt by him to be cruel indeed; sorrow of the heart in those early years is often very acute. At last the maréchal was compelled to speak for him, and to inform the council of his majesty's intention to unite himself in marriage with the Infanta of Spain, etc., etc.

Still it was necessary he should notify that the announcement was made with his approval. He, however, vouchsafed no reply to the question; and the council, like the regent on the previous day, had to be content with a reluctantly whispered utterance, supposed to be "*oui.*"

The exchange of the young brides-elect took place some months afterwards at the Ile des Faisans, where, sixty-two years before, was held the famous conference between Mazarin and Don Haro, which preceded the marriage of Louis XIV. with the Spanish Princess Maria Théresa. The regent's daughter, Mdlle. de Montpensier, was twelve years of age; the Infanta, Maria Anna Victoria only

three. There appears to have been no ceremony of betrothal. The king would probably have stoutly resisted that, as an attempt to actually marry him.

The little princess was taken to the Château de Rambouillet, about nine leagues from Paris, to be brought up there, under the *surveillance* of the Comtesse de Toulouse, a sister of the Duc de Noailles. The Comte de Toulouse, brother of the Duc du Maine, had but recently declared his marriage with this lady. It seems to have been considered a *mésalliance*, though the Count was but a legitimated prince. At all events, Rambouillet was rather looked down upon by Sceaux—so far, at least, as the Duchesse du Maine, princess of the blood, was concerned. But the comtesse was younger and prettier, which displeased the duchesse. She was infinitely more charming, too, and without that great lady's pretension to the reputation of a *bel esprit* and *femme savante.*

The park and forest of Rambouillet were of great extent; and as the king was already fond of the chase, he was a frequent visitor at the château. His youthful *fiancée* was, no doubt, placed there on that

account, as well as because the home of the Comte de Toulouse and his wife was one of conjugal fidelity and happiness, of which instances were rare indeed in the society of that period.

CHAPTER XIII.

Madame de Tencin.—Gambling at the Hôtel Tencin.—A Terrible Reputation.—"Le Grand Cyrus."—"Le Comte de Comminges."—A Delighted Audience.—Voltaire on his Knees.—Destouches and Marivaux.—Veteran Leaders of Society.—The Literary Ménagerie.—Madame de Tencin's Suppers.—Up to the Ankles in Mud.—Fontenelle's Mistake.

IN the midst of fine gardens, adjoining the extensive ones of the hôtel of the wealthy financier, Samuel Bernard, in the Place des Victoires, there stood, at the time of the regency, a very handsome residence, known as l'Hôtel Tencin. It belonged to Guérin de Tencin, Archévêque d'Embrun, and Chargé-d'Affaires de l'Eglise, à Rouen. To these high ecclesiastical dignities Tencin had been recently raised by the new Cardinal Archbishop Dubois, whom the regent had made first Minister of State. Few are said to have shown less respect for the priestly character

than Archbishop Tencin. But he was a man of considerable talent, and his arguments had gone far to wring from Cardinal de Noailles an unwilling acceptance of the terrible Bull; therefore his election by Dubois.

Madame Alexandrine Guérin de Tencin did the honours of her brother's hôtel, and her *salon* was one of the most famous of the regency and early part of the reign of Louis XV. Imitating the great Cardinal de Richelieu in the *salon* of Marion de l'Orme, the Cardinal Dubois established his literary police in the *salon* of Madame de Tencin.

This lady, so witty, so pleasing, receiving her guests so graciously, yet less with the air of the mistress of the house than with a certain graceful diffidence, as of a sister dependent on her brother, the archbishop, was one of the most finished of *intrigantes*. Destined from childhood for the cloister, she was brought up in the Convent of Grenoble, and entered on her noviciate at the usual age; but her repugnance to monastic life was so intense and persistent that, instead of taking the veil, she was allowed to leave the convent, and become chanoinesse of Neuville, near Lyons. Soon after, she appeared in the *beau monde* of Paris,

and figured very prominently at the Court of the regent, amongst such *belles dames* as *les* Marquises et Comtesses de Prie, de Parabère, du Deffant, d'Antragues, and others. As *amie intime* of Dubois, she had been the means of securing preferment for her brother, who had himself found favour with the regent, in the quality of political spy. Both brother and sister, as well as their patron Dubois, had profited largely by the Système Law.

There was yet another Hôtel Tencin, with fine grounds reaching to the gardens of the Capucine Convent—the space now occupied by the Rue de la Paix. This was the property of Madame de Tencin, and before her brother's elevation her *salon* was held there. While Law was Contrôleur-général, gambling went on at this hôtel to an immense extent. Fortunes changed hands there more than once in the course of an evening, and in passing from one to another, a large share often fell into the lap of the lady who presided.

She speculated largely, and risked her valuable shares in the Royal Bank, apparently with extraordinary recklessness; but her lucky star was always in the ascendant, thanks to the private information she received from head-

quarters. Montesquieu and Voltaire were less fortunate when they yielded to the general allurement. This makes them so bitter when referring, not to Madame de Tencin, in whose *salon* they were often to be found, but to the famous Système itself.

Madame was desirous of being reputed firm in her friendships, but a terrible enemy. The *sobriquet* of "*religieuse defroquée*" had been applied to her, and it was said that "were it to her interest to poison a friend, she would do it; but in the politest and gentlest way possible." Strange tales, too, were afloat of dark deeds done in her hôtel. But we know that it was the fashionable mania of the *beau monde* of the regency to exaggerate its vices; as though the round unvarnished tale of its doings were not vicious enough. So that we are compelled to believe that that libertine circle, like a certain great potentate, was not so black as it was painted; and painted by itself. At all events, Madame Tencin was rich at the time now referred to. That would have absolved her, whatever misdeeds she had been guilty of; though society could in any case hardly cast stones at her—nor did it, for her *salon* was one of the most brilliant of the period.

Like that of Madame de Lambert it was considered *un salon de la haute littérature;* but more philosophical, more *libertine.* Montesquieu, Fontenelle, Le Marquis de Pont-de-Veyle, and his brother le Comte d'Argental (the last two her nephews), were of the number of her guests. She had written some three or four short tales, or romances of a sentimental kind. All of them at the time of their appearance were favourably received, both by her own circle and by the *beau monde* generally. "Le Comte de Comminges" had the greatest reputation. La Harpe has considered it not inferior to "La Princesse de Cleves" of Madame de la Fayette. Indeed, the writings of those ladies were bound up together in an edition issued in Paris in 1786 or 1787.

Those who have dipped into those lackadaisical tales, will surely be of opinion that they are worthily united. One may be led on, if interested in the period, to wade through the ten portly volumes of Mdlle. de Scudéry's "Grand Cyrus." Being certain that while accomplishing that feat, a considerable knowledge of the social life of the early half of the seventeenth century has been acquired, and acquaintance made with most of the celebrities

of that epoch. But the sickly sentimentality of La Fayette and Tencin is too overpowering. Should a dose of it ever be taken, another of sal volatile, as a corrective, should always be ready at hand, for of volatility there is less than none in "Les Chagrins d'Amour," "Le Comte de Comminges," &c.

Nevertheless, the last-named story is said to have once had a singular effect on a crowded *salon* of ladies and philosophers assembled to hear Madame de Tencin read it. The lady, herself calm and unmoved, read on to the end of the tale, her well-modulated voice giving due emphasis to its heart-rending love passages; her audience, meanwhile, being profoundly silent. She felt the compliment and exerted herself to deserve it.

As, with deep pathos, she pronounced the last words, she raised her eyes from her manuscript, with an expression of grateful thanks, expecting to meet those of her friends suffused with tears. What, then, was her astonishment, her indignation, to find that scarcely an eye was open? The numerous assembly was for the greater part wrapped in peaceful slumber. The few that were not, were feebly struggling to keep open the lids that Somnus was gradually

closing; or were endeavouring to hide with their handkerchiefs the shame of their irrepressible yawns. Amusement prevailed with Madame de Tencin over her first feeling of indignation; and, meanwhile, the cessation of the dulcet tones that had had so soothing an effect, together with her ringing laugh, aroused the sleepers.

"Charming story!" cried one. "*Ravissant!* Madame de Tencin, *c'est vraiment ravissant,*" chimed in another.

"Thank you," she said. "I shall re-christen this charming story and call on all present to subscribe to the propriety of its new title—'A Remedy against Sleeplessness.'"

"Ah! Madame de Tencin," replied Montesquieu, "I perceive that you are alluding to me. Allow me to assure you, allow me to persuade you, that if my eyes, as you may have remarked, were momentarily closed, they were not closed in sleep."

"Of course not!" cried the rest of the company; "Madame de Tencin cannot think so."

"Now, don't look incredulous. Believe me it was merely to allow the mind, by the exclusion of outward objects, to dwell upon and enjoy more completely those exquisitely im-

passioned ideas with which you have endowed your hero, and the beauty of the language in which he expresses them."

"Of course!" again echoed the company.

"Usbeck," * she replied, laughingly, "shall make it the subject of another Persian letter. He shall declare that it would have pleased him much, but for its overpowering effect on his eyelids. And let all here confess the same. Now confess, confess, and I will pardon you all, and the archbishop shall give you absolution. I except Fontenelle, his eyes were open, if his ears were closed. And so were those of my fair Haidée, † though I imagine the Chevalier ‡ worked that miracle."

All the *beaux esprits* and rising literary men of the time were diligent frequenters of the *salon* of Madame de Tencin. Voltaire, of course, had gone on his knees to her. It was his habit, from youth to old age (Grimm says, "His breeches always bore marks of it"), to cast himself prostrate before beauty and

* One of the personages of Montesquieu's "Lettres Persanes"—A satire on the regency.

† La belle Circassienne, Mdlle. Aïssé.

‡ Her lover, the Chevalier d'Aidye—Chevalier de l'Ordre de Malte.

esprit, whether combined or separate. If either was wanting, he imagined it present, as in those strange lines to Mdme. du Châtelet :—

> "Ecoutez, respectable Emilie,
> Vous êtes belle; ainsi donc la moitié
> Du genre humain sera votre ennemie."

A pure poetical fiction, and a ludicrous one to those acquainted with this colossal *belle*.

Destouches, the dramatist, who had at least achieved one sensational success in his comedy of "Le Glorieux," was a constant *habitué* of this literary *salon*. Marivaux also, a *protégé* of Madame, ever torturing his wits to make a telling epigram of every sentence he uttered.

To her efforts, in some degree, was owing a certain short-lived vogue which his pieces occasionally obtained. They are bombastic, and affected in style. Nevertheless, Marivaux evidently was an observer of society. His conceit and pretentiousness are scarcely less evident. Yet one may detect in his plays the prevailing feeling of the time, in the effort he makes to show that the reputed best sentiments of human nature are but vanity. That those who put faith in them are the dupes of their own hearts; all that seemingly is so estimable

in the character, so praiseworthy in the conduct, being a mere mask to conceal selfish ends.

Madame de Tencin was particularly zealous in her endeavours to forward the literary and social career of those young men who made their *début*, as it was termed, in her *salon*. It was a custom of that time for ladies who, in early years, had filled a distinguished position in society, to seek to continue their influence beyond that melancholy period (in France the terrible *quarantaine*) when the last flickering gleams of youth and beauty are fading away. They erected for themselves a new empire, as it were—formed a new and attractive *salon*, and as they advanced in years, became the oracles of polite society. The youthful *noblesse* and young men of fortune frequented their *cercles* "*pour se former*," as the phrase went; as also *pour s'amuser*. To succeed in the good graces of one of these veteran leaders of the *beau monde*, was to secure "*un brevet d'élégance, et de savoir vivre.*"

François Marie Arouet, so annoyed at not being born *gentilhomme*, as Voltaire* acquired in

* The name of Voltaire is probably derived from a very small property—la ferme de Veautaire—in the district of

the *salons* the manners of one, and very early, "*faisait le gentilhomme de lettres.*" There were others—Piron and Crebillon, for instance —to whom the *cabaret* was a more congenial resort. The latter, rough and bearish; the former, witty, but of low, convivial tastes, and often launching an epigram at this *beau monde* of learning. Equally would they have felt out of place in the elegant *salon* of Madame de Tencin, who was one of those women who took the *haut pas* in literary circles. Notwithstanding her sentimental novelettes, she was "*un bel esprit profond*"—far more vivacious and brilliant than Madame du Deffant, and having none of her real or affected fits of *ennui.*

Singularly enough, however, Madame de Tencin gave her distinguished circle of wits and *literati* the name of the *ménagerie.* Stranger still, she put her learned *bêtes* into a sort of livery. And they did not regard it, apparently, as *infra dig.* to accept from her every year, as their *etrennes*, three ells of velvet each, for a new

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Asnières-sur-Oise, about ten leagues from Paris, and which Voltaire inherited from a cousin; changing Veautaire into Voltaire, for euphony's sake, when assuming the name.

culotte. Besides, she gave them, three times a week, and all the year round, a splendid supper —a supper that was renowned, even in those days of *recherchés petits-soupers*, and pure, sparkling, and iced champagne.

Montesquieu and Fontenelle she distinguished as her "*bêtes par excellence.*" Fontenelle appears to have supped everywhere. He dined every Thursday at Madame de Lambert's, elsewhere probably on other days, and took his "*thé à l'Anglaise*" (then beginning to be fashionable) in any *salon* where he found it introduced. He allowed nothing in the world to ruffle the placidity of his temper, and carefully guarded against any disturbing emotions.

Once a friend died suddenly, sitting beside him. He quietly desired his servants to remove him, and there was an end of it. By thus preserving the even tenor of his life, he coaxed on a weak constitution, year after year, until he had eked out a hundred. He was already as deaf as a post, but it amused his mind to see what was going on if he could not hear; so that there was no more constant frequenter of the *salons* than "le vieux Fontenelle." The one misfortune of his deafness was, that he always fancied he or his works were

the subject of conversation, and it was fatiguing to make him hear and believe that he was under a mistake.

Mairan, being of the company assembled at Madame de Tencin's one evening, was relating a story of a peasant on a friend's estate who had greatly bewailed the death of a fellow-workman who had fallen into a ditch and was suffocated. "The mud was so deep," he said, "that it reached nearly to his ankles." "Surely, then," answered the master, "he could have stepped out of it, or you might have assisted him to do so." "Surely, as you say, I might," replied the man, "if he had not fallen into it head-foremost." The peasant's *naïve* remark, on his companion's misfortune raised general laughter. Fontenelle, however, very gravely said, "I perceive that M. Mairan is talking of my works."

This renewed the laughter. "My 'Traité des Mondes' does not please him, I suppose," he said, speaking very sulkily.

La Motte undertook the task of explaining to him the subject of conversation; but, after vociferating for some time in his ears, scarcely convinced him that he was in error, and that his well-deserved reputation was by no means

being called in question by the friends and the admirers of his genius, who then surrounded him.

Had it been otherwise, he would not have allowed their censure to fret him, though he thought it right to make known his suspicions.

CHAPTER XIV.

Exuberant Joy. — Dining in Public. — Public Rejoicings. — Loyalty still Flourishes.—The Maréchal de Villeroi.—When Louis XIV. was Young. — The Majestic Perruque. — A Grand Seigneur of the Old Régime.—Fireworks of the Eighteenth Century.—The Young King's Greeting.—The Grand Bow Louis XIV.—Villeroi Dismissed.—Un Abbé Elégant.—The Bishop Retires to Issy. — Coronation of Louis XV.—Death of Dubois.—Dubois' Immense Wealth. —Political Lessons.—The Regent First Minister.—Death of the Regent.

HERE are crowds in the Rue St. Honoré, in the Rue St. Antoine and the Place du Carrousel. One might fancy that the whole population of Paris was massed together in that vast multitude pressing around the Tuileries and filling every open space near it. But the throng—and a joyous throng it seems—still is increasing; every narrow, winding street and crooked dark, alley of this dear, delightful, dirty, old city sending forth its contingent to add to the number.

An Englishman well might wonder whence

this swarming multitude came; where this vast assemblage of human beings found shelter. For Paris was never allowed to straggle, like London, in all directions, with its one or two-storeyed houses. It had to shoot upwards, and as its population increased, to put storey upon storey to the extent of eight or ten. Some say, even one above that; perched aloft like a sky-raker above the gallant-top-royal sail of a big ship, and forming almost the only breezy dwelling-places old Paris could boast of.

Evidently the disasters of the bygone year —disasters so great that even Dubois has been compelled to say, "Something must be done for the people"—have happily been followed by an event of unusual interest; some alleviation of the penury that prevails; some promise of returning national prosperity, to call forth such general rejoicing. In the exuberance of their joy, there are some simple folks who warmly embrace any stranger they meet, as though suddenly encountering long-lost friends.

Many a *jolie fille,* too, you observe, as she passes along, is startled by an unexpected embrace from some gay, gallant fellow. Not seldom the *jolie fille* resents this freedom with a vigour that makes the offender's ears tingle, and

deservedly draws upon him the laughter and witty *badinage* of his companions. But it is a good-tempered crowd, brimful of life and spirits.

The Café Procope and Café de la Régence are both full of guests, and here, as elsewhere, all is gaiety and mirth.* But except at these cafés, and among the noisy itinerant vendors of cocoa, pastry, and sweets, little business is doing. Paris has heartily, and with its usual *abandon*, given itself up to pleasure. But if the shops, for the most part, are closed, many of the shopkeepers have brought out their tables and chairs, and are taking their dinner *al fresco*, any friend chancing to pass being pressed to sit down and share the meal with them.

This open-air feasting is attended with difficulties, for *trottoirs* exist not; the streets are very narrow, and slope down on either side towards the gutter in the centre. But the will to dine and be hospitable in public being there, the way to do so is, by some means, found out. "*Liberté, égalité, fraternité*," generally prevail,

* These cafés of the regency were the first cafés established in Paris, and, like the London taverns of that date, were much frequented by literary men.

and, practically, to a much greater extent than probably they will should those words, now fluttering on some people's lips, ever become the national motto.

Uninterruptedly these public rejoicings have been going on for the last fifteen days. The Church has, of course, borne its part in them; preaching endless thanksgiving sermons, and chanting numberless Te Deum. However, it is beginning to be the general opinion that there has been rejoicing enough. It is not wise to take an overdose, even of a good thing. So, in the evening, all is to terminate, with illuminations and fireworks, and a grand *fête* at the Tuileries. Better than all, the enthusiastic people are in hopes of getting just a glimpse of their king. The old duke—whose attachment to his youthful sovereign has secured for himself the attachment of the people—will no doubt bring him out on the balcony to gladden the eyes of his faithful lieges.

As for himself, poor boy, the ceremonial, the etiquette, and the fuss that surround him, weigh like a nightmare on his spirits. He will neither appear in the balcony, nor be present at the *fête* if he can have his own way. He would rather be milking his cow, or digging his

garden. Nature, indeed, seems to have intended that a spade should be put in his hands when Fortune, in her lamentable blindness, made the mistake of handing him a sceptre. But the people, always so hopeful, are looking forward to the reign of Louis XV. for relief from those burdens which the regency was to have removed. His majority is nigh at hand. But a boy of thirteen cannot of course be expected to take sole command of the helm of state; until he can do so, the people have faith in the guidance of Villeroi and Fleury.

Philosophy as yet has appeared only in the *salons,* where it is expanding under the fostering care of fine ladies. Loyalty still flourishes in France, and has found earnest expression in the enthusiasm with which the nation has celebrated the young king's restoration to health. Equally did it appear in the grief and anxiety generally exhibited while it seemed probable that his illness would terminate fatally. Ardent suppliants crowded the churches, and the nation cried to heaven, "Spare our king!" He is spared; and the reaction of boundless joy has followed the anxious fluctuations of hope and fear.

As usual, suspicions of poisoning were rife.

They rested on the head of Dubois, who had suggested the removal of the royal patient from Vincennes to more airy quarters at Versailles. The suspicion of an evil intention may have been groundless, but as he attributed only base motives to others, he could not complain if he himself was misjudged. Had the king died, it is believed that Dubois could not have escaped with life from the vengeance of the infuriated people. It is singular that neither the regent nor any member of the government contributed anything towards the expenses of the public festival. The Duc de Villeroi, from his own private purse, shared them with the municipality of the Hotel de Ville, and even defrayed the cost of the oft-repeated prayers of the Church and the Te Deum.

The old maréchal, Duc de Villeroi, *un très grand seigneur*, in his day, a very handsome man, and still (remember he has passed his eightieth year) of noble presence, is in manner a perfect specimen of the *galantérie* of the *vieille cour*. His father was governor to Louis XIV., which was chiefly that monarch's reason for appointing the son, who was brought up with him, to the same post in the household of his successor. The old duke is not so con-

temptible a personage as the slanderous pen of Saint-Simon represents him. He is probably somewhat vainglorious,. and his heart swells with a pardonable pride when he tells of that brilliant time when he and Louis XIV. were young. He perceives that a great change has taken place, but he perceives no improvement; and his views are, in that respect, shared by many.

He, too, comforts himself with the hope that much good is laid up for France in the womb of the future. But his hope differs from that of the nation, in that it is based on his own constant efforts to train up his youthful charge in the traditions of the grand reign of the *Grand Monarque*, with a view to a return to the "Système Antiquaille."

How keen was the dear old maréchal's anxiety during the illness of young Louis, who it seems was suffering from a bad sore throat. (It would be called diphtheria in more enlightened days). The maréchal undertook the office of head nurse, and had the broths, etc., made only by confidential people of his own. Yet, with all his vigilance, Madame de Parabère contrived to slip in and give the sick child some marmalade, which appears to have really done

him good. It was in grateful remembrance of this and various other surreptitious little presents of *bonbons* and *gauffrelettes*, that Louis XV. was always so gracious to Madame de Parabère; even when the court circle looked coldly upon her, because, having lost favour, places and pensions were no longer obtainable through her influence.

But the maréchal is now as jubilant as but a few weeks ago he was despondent; and in doing the honours of this grand *fête* in celebration of the king's recovery, acquits himself with admirable grace. His wrinkled brow, erst so careworn, is now smooth, fair, and polished; a full score of years seem to have passed away from it. He would have liked to resume the "*majestueuse perruque de* Louis XIV." —as De Tocqueville, sighing over its abandonment, regretfully calls it. But he knows that the ladies would laugh at him, and the graceless young wits make epigrams on the majestic wig. So he contents himself with the paltry *perruque* of diminished proportions now in vogue; thoroughly powdered at the top, and the ends gracefully tied up in a bag behind. And well it becomes his venerable, yet still handsome face.

His velvet coat is elaborately embroidered, and the lappels of his long satin vest, the same. His ruffles and the ends of his cravat are of *point d'Alençon* of the finest texture. A diamond star forms the button in his hat, and his sword has a diamond-set hilt. Diamonds fasten at the knee his puckered satin breeches; diamond buckles his red-heeled shoes; and the grand crosses of the Orders of the St. Esprit and St. Louis glitter in rubies and diamonds on his breast.

Stately and erect stands the old maréchal—a perfect picture of a *grand seigneur* of the *Old Régime.* He leads the young king by the hand to look at the illuminated gardens, and the river lighted up by some hundreds of illuminated boats, ranged on either side of the stream. "Artificial swans and other aquatic birds float on the water." "Several whales, launched from behind screens or sheds on the shore, spout fire as they enter the stream."

A grand display of fireworks closes the *fête.* From drawings of set pieces used on this and other occasions, one must infer that the French pyrotechnists of that day excelled in their art. Yet facilities for doing so were few, compared with those afforded by the chemical discoveries

and mechanical improvements of recent times. It is probable, however, that transparent paintings were frequently employed to form an effective centre to a border of fire. But whatever they were, they gave immense satisfaction to the people, who, attracted by the object of the *fête* in question, came from far and near to see them.

Never, perhaps, at any other period of his life, was Louis XV. so truly "the well-beloved" of the nation. How dense the crowd! What an interest the good people of Paris take in their king! Not only in the streets and in the vicinity of the palace; but at every house, heads, two, three, in rows, ranged one above another, peer forth from every window. The top of every wall is taken possession of, and the roofs of the houses are crowded. No slight projection where a foot can be placed, no piece of cornice which a hand can grasp, but finds some foolhardy enthusiast willing to risk life and limb to seize upon it—fortunate, indeed, if the only result of his scramble be that he sees, what so frequently is seen by scrambling in a crowd—nothing at all of what he looked for.

"*Voila le vieux maréchal!*" exclaim several

voices; the closely-packed mass of human beings beginning to move excitedly.

"*Ah! il nous mêne le petit roi!*" is shrieked in a woman's voice.

"*Au diable ces femmes! que viennent-elles faire ici?*" says somebody, striving to elbow the woman out of her place, in order to fill it more worthily himself. He sees that the maréchal is leading the king into the balcony.

Yes, both are there, hand in hand, representing the threshold of life and the brink of the grave. Louis is a handsome boy; rather small for his age, as was Louis XIV., who, from about his thirteenth year, sprang up apace—as this boy, probably, will do. He looks well in his white-plumed hat and embroidered blue velvet dress. His beautiful hair flows in its natural curls, unconfined by black riband and bag, and free from the starch-powder with which old and young are now so lavishly dusted. His jewels and grand crosses make a glittering show. He wears, you perceive, the "Sancy" in his hat. Its scintillation is wonderful, as the flickering lights in the balcony and the gleams from the illuminated trees fall upon it.

The people greet their young monarch with hearty enthusiasm. The air rings with a cry of

delight from thousands of voices. It is, doubtless, a gladdening sound to the heart of the old duke. But its suddenness and wildness startle the child. He seems to be appealing to his governor; then, advancing a step, raises his hat with much grace. (Villeroi has taught him the grand bow Louis Quatorze.)

Louder, far louder than before, is the people's responsive burst of joy. The duke drops the king's hand. Louis, released, seizes the opportunity of escaping, with a rush, from the terrible din. Though somewhat disconcerted, the duke turns with a benignant air towards the admiring multitude, and, with a certain dignified condescension, that should surely atone for the want of ceremony in royalty's departure, raises his hat, bends slightly forward, then decamps to discover the hiding-place of his king.

The king has taken refuge in the Salle des Gardes, and is reposing in a chair in a quiet corner. The noise and excitement of the almost delirious multitude surrounding the Tuileries so agitated him that he was seized with giddiness in the head. He declared "*Qu'il n'y pouvait plus tenir.*" However, he was sufficiently himself again in the course of half an hour to

gratify the earnestly-vociferated prayer of the frantic people that the maréchal would again gladden their eyes with a sight of their king. Yielding, therefore, to these coaxing words—"*Mon maître, mon chèr maître!* come now, show yourself just for a moment, only one moment, to your good people of Paris, who love you so much, and are so longing to see you!"—he gave his hand to his governor, stepped out on the balcony, and received the reward of his condescension in another uproarious ovation.

Not long after the Maréchal de Villeroi had given so signal a proof of his loyalty and attachment to the young king, he was dismissed to his government. His exaggerated fears lest the king should be poisoned, made him unwilling to allow even the regent to see him at any time, unless he were present at the interview. The regent, much annoyed, resented this, and insisted on his leaving the apartment. Later in the day, an officer arrived with a *lettre-de-cachet*, when, to his extreme mortification, the old duke was obliged at once to step into the carriage waiting for him, and proceed to Bayonne—there to remain until further orders.

The Duc de Charost was appointed to suc-

ceed to the post of governor. But the king took Villeroi's departure greatly to heart. Whatever he felt, he rarely exhibited any violent emotion. On this occasion, he laid his face against the back of a chair and silently wept. He would not eat, he would not speak. When entreated to go out, or to amuse himself in some way, he refused, and remained awake, weeping and sobbing, the whole night through. Still further to increase his distress, he learned the next morning that his preceptor also had left.

Between the duke and the bishop there existed a friendship of very long standing. It dated indeed from the time when Fleury—a remarkably handsome man, with a fondness, which with excellent taste he ever retained, for ladies' society—was favourably received as "*un abbé élégant*," and a desperate flirt, in the *boudoir* circle of Madame de Villeroi. She was considerably younger than the duke. But of course her flirting days were now over. Not exactly (so scandal whispered) were those of Fleury. Yet though he did not now flirt with the duchess, they remained very firm friends. It was probably, therefore, as much for her sake as for the duke's, that, at the time of their

appointment as preceptor and governor, he had entered into a mutual promise with the duke that if either was dismissed from his post by the regent, the other should resign.

Consequently, as soon as the duke was exiled, the bishop hastened away to his little estate at Issy, thence intending, probably, to send in his resignation. He took no leave of his royal pupil, as he may have foreseen that the separation would be but a short one. And just so it proved. Louis regretted his fussy, but kind old governor; but Fleury, so amiable and estimable, if far too indulgent, had stood towards him in the place of a parent, and had gained his affection as such. His grief, his despair, was so great when informed that he was absent, and did not, it was supposed, intend to return, that he was pacified only by the immediate dispatch of a messenger to Issy, with a letter from himself, requiring the bishop immediately to come back to Vincennes.

Of course he did not refuse obedience to the royal command; and friendship—even for an old flame—could not have asked it of him. The preceptor was received by his pupil with open arms, and with signs of joy more evident than had ever been observed in him before.

The Duc de Charost took the opportunity of making himself agreeable to the young king, by appearing to share in his joy, and the banished duke had the mortification of knowing that he was not so necessary to the happiness of his king as he had fondly supposed.

The regent, from his mode of life, had become more and more indisposed to be troubled with cares of state. Therefore, shortly after he had roused himself to resent with so much harshness, though naturally disposed to leniency, the foolish suspicions of the old maréchal, he appointed Dubois first minister—in fact, gave up the regency into his hands, that he might be more fully at liberty to devote himself entirely to his pleasures. From the despotic manner in which the cardinal immediately began to exercise his newly-acquired power, it was very soon perceived that his ambitious aims were not yet satisfied; and that he would not scruple, in order successfully to realize them, to sacrifice the regent himself.

On the 26th of October, 1722, Louis XV. was crowned at Rheims, with much pomp and ceremony. Comte d'Argenson, at this time, compared him, in appearance, to Cupid. Yet Cupid enveloped in a gold-embroidered ermine-

lined mantle of state, with the crown of Charlemagne on his head, and bearing a sceptre and "hand of justice," would surely be rather overdressed—his usual costume being so scanty; rarely anything more than a pair of wings, a quiver full of arrows, and his bow. Dubois made a great figure on this occasion; taking his place in the cavalcade amongst the highest nobles in the land. On the 22nd of February following, the king, being then thirteen years and twelve days old, a *lit-de-justice* was held, and he was publicly declared of age.

Dubois, it would seem, needed only opportunity to prove himself capable of greater things than hitherto he had been supposed to be. The regent's power at an end, he gave promise of becoming a most able minister of state, and desirous of adapting his conduct to the dignity of his position. But a long course of dissipation had undermined his constitution, and he died on the 10th of August, 1723, in his sixty-seventh year, a few hours after enduring the agony of a painful operation. He either refused the sacraments of the church, or on some frivolous pretext eluded partaking of them.

The wealth amassed by Dubois, during his

short tenure of power, was enormous. Besides a large sum of money in his strong box, he possessed costly furniture, and a quantity of gold and silver plate of the most artistic workmanship; precious stones of rare beauty and value; sumptuous equipages, and (then most envied of all, by the *noblesse*) the largest and finest stud in France. Rich *abbayes* and lucrative appointments and places, both civil and ecclesiastical—lavishly bestowed on himself—brought him an immense revenue, in addition to his large pension for promoting the political views of England with reference to France. He had, doubtless, dreamed of living yet many years to enjoy this vast wealth, and of outvying, in ostentatious splendour and the magnitude of their power, both Richelieu and Mazarin.

This was at a time when the State, still suffering from the ruinous results of the "Système Law," could neither pay the salaries of its officers, nor the annuities of its pensioners. But having provided liberally for himself, Dubois had some project *in petto*, which was to restore the credit of the government, and gradually to refill its coffers.

Meanwhile, he had very judiciously arranged,

for the instruction of the young king, a series of what may be termed political lessons. They took place at Versailles, three times a week; and, to impress upon him their importance, a certain etiquette was prescribed for them. An arm-chair was placed for his majesty at the centre of a table. On his right sat the regent; on his left Monsieur le Duc. Opposite, on a folding seat, sat Dubois, the Bishop of Fréjus on one side, the Duc de Charost on the other, also seated on "*pliants.*"

But it was difficult to awaken an interest in so dry a theme, in the mind of a youth who had not been trained in habits of application, and who was besides indolently disposed. He listened to the subject laid before him with an air of lazy resignation to his fate, occasionally glancing at Fleury, as though seeking in his benignant face consolation and sympathy, to enable him to hold out to the end of the *séance.* He asked for no explanation, yet gave no signs of understanding, or indeed of heeding the questions discussed. Nevertheless it is probable that the political acumen which he is said to have exhibited in after years, when amusing himself with his secret diplomacy, may have been acquired at this time.

The regent, according to some writers, regretted Dubois, others say that he jested when he heard of his death, exclaiming, "*Enfin donc le diable a emporté mon drôle!*" But his own health was in a very precarious state, his face had become of a purple red, a sort of stupor often overcame him, and his head was bowed forward on his chest. Everything so disgusted him, that he was scarcely capable of either fretting or jesting.

He, however, assumed Dubois' post of first minister; made an effort to reform his mode of life; and, in order not to set a bad example to the young king, who now sojourned more frequently at the Tuileries, he even, we learn, went so far in his reform as to content himself with but one *maîtresse-en-titre,* Madame d'Antragues—in the Roman states, Duchesse de Falari. She was the wife of a financier, to whom Clement XI., for some service of a financial nature, had given the title of Duke.

But the excesses of the *petits-soupers* still went on, and the regent drank the usual quantity of his favourite *vin* d'Ai. His physicians warned him that dropsy or apoplexy would be the result of his intemperance. "Not dropsy," he said, "it is too lingering; death stares one

in the face too long, and I had hoped to meet death from a cannon-ball on the battle-field." And a death as sudden was granted him. Sitting beside the Duchesse de Falari, he suddenly exclaimed, "Madelon! Madelon!—*sauvez moi*," and fell dead at her feet.

No physician was at hand. A lackey in attendance opened a vein with a penknife; but the regent never spoke more. As he had desired, death's shaft had been swift and sure. Thus passed away, in his forty-ninth year, Philippe Duc d'Orleans—a man of great abilities, amiable disposition, and much personal fascination; but whose shame or misfortune it was to disbelieve in the existence of virtue, and thus to become a corrupter of the morals of the age, by the evil example of a depraved life and the parade of atheistic principles.

The young king regretted the regent, and always spoke of him with affection; and many of those who most lamented the criminal weakness of his character were nevertheless his sincerely attached friends.

CHAPTER XV.

Monsieur le Duc.—Taking Time by the Forelock.—The New Limits of Paris.—The Réverbère Invented.—Dark Streets of Old Paris.—Crossing the Gutters.—What became of the Children.—The Liveliest City in Europe.—Shopkeepers' Signboards.—The Lieutenant de Police.—The Terrible "Damné."—Police Espionnage.—A Keeper of Secrets.

UILDING in Paris, beyond certain limits, had been rigorously prohibited during the last reign. An inclination to expand beyond them had been resolutely checked by the decree of 1672. The old walls were then thrown down, and the space assigned by the great Louis as the extreme fixed boundary of the city and its faubourgs was defined and planted. Thus far, and no farther, should the good people of Paris be allowed to extend their dwellings. Upwards they might rise—as far as Heaven's portal, if they could reach it; but not a foot nearer the sacred precincts of Versailles should they be allowed to approach.

During the regency the prohibition was not strictly enforced. Probably it was looked upon as altogether obsolete, when, most unexpectedly, the edict was renewed at the instance of the Duc de Bourbon. M. le Duc was now first minister, though possessing no especial capacity for the post. He was without experience, and known only for his rancorous hatred towards the Duc du Maine, and the deep interest he had taken in the Système Law. He had supplanted the duke, and by the Système had added to his slender means some two or three millions of livres; he also raised the amount of a small income to a very handsome revenue by exchanging Law's paper for fine estates. There was a ferocity in his disposition that yielded only to the influence of his mistress, Madame de Prie, who governed him absolutely.

Having a fancy to govern France also, she despatched her lover, as soon as it was ascertained that the regent was actually dead, to seek the king, in order to request for himself the vacant post of first minister. The young monarch, who was engaged with his preceptor, was greatly embarrassed by the request, and consulted the countenance of Fleury for his answer. But the bishop neither by word nor look ex-

pressed approval or disapproval. His face wore its usual calm and benignant expression. His eyes remained half closed, as though but partly awakened from a comfortable snooze, and desiring only to renew it. The king may have understood this as a nodding assent, as he at once, without speaking, nodded an affirmative to M. le Duc's application.

Most conveniently, the *brevet* was ready, merely requiring to be filled up; possibly it had been intended for Fleury himself. However, it was signed on the instant, and the Duc took the customary oath; then departed to congratulate his *belle maîtresse* on the triumph of their *coup-de-main*, and on her wisdom in advising him to take time by the forelock.

It had been thought probable that the Duc de Chartres, the regent's son, might, on his father's death, be roused from his devotions by ambition and the desire of succeeding to his post. But the young duke (he was now twenty-four) continued, as Duc d'Orleans, to lead the same life of seclusion. Some years before, seduced by the regent's example, he had temporarily shared in his and his *roués'* excesses. But, disgusted by their extreme licentiousness, he withdrew from the court, and led the life of

a penitent, controlled entirely by Jesuit priests. The death of his father produced no change in his conduct or views. He could scarcely, however, be considered sane, being under the influence of some extraordinary delusions. The wits gave him the name of "D'Orleans de Ste. Geneviève."

In what way neglect of the restrictions on building beyond the old limits of Paris concerned M. le Duc or Madame de Prie does not appear. But as self-interest was the guiding star of both, it may be imagined that the value of property belonging to one or the other was jeopardized by it. That which, owing to laxity during the regency in respect of new buildings, had already been done by those who sought quietude and a breath of fresh air—then only obtainable in Paris in the gardens and grounds of convents and the hôtels of the *noblesse*—could not be easily undone. New limits were therefore marked out and planted, soon after Louis XV. was declared of age—and Paris was allowed to spread, some hundred yards or so, in the various directions already built upon.

Paris at this time—1724—was noisier and dirtier than in the preceding century. The streets had no names affixed to them until 1729.

Some unusually conspicuous signboard, a neighbouring convent, or the hôtel of a grandee, served to distinguish those which were less generally known than the streets specially inhabited by certain trades—such as the Rues de la Tixeranderie, de la Ferronnerie, Quai des Orfévres, etc. Numbering the houses was not attempted for many a long year after; but every house had a sign of some sort, which answered the purpose of a number.

In 1745 the Abbé Matherot de Préguey invented the *réverbère*. Until then, an occasional tallow candle, placed in a lantern and suspended aloft some twenty-five feet above the roadway, was the only light the municipality vouchsafed to guide the footsteps of belated citizens over the marshes and quagmires of the dusky streets. And even these candles, however far they might throw their feeble beams, and shine, as Portia says, like "a good deed in a naughty world," could not always be depended upon. They were often puffed out when the wind was strong; and sometimes a thief (in the candle) guttered them out. The company of lantern-bearers was not then thought of, much less established; so that, unless the midnight wanderer had his own private lanterns and bearers,

as many persons had, or carried a lantern himself, what a sad predicament he must have been in!

To heap the agony still higher, imagine the rain coming heavily down. That, of course, would put out the candles. Some one, perhaps, may reply, "No one in his senses would, in that case, go out on foot."

True; but rain often comes on unexpectedly. Paris, too, was becoming exceedingly old. Many of its dilapidated wooden houses with plastered fronts—dating not less than two hundred years back—appeared to be on the point of falling. With every fall of rain there came crumbling down a portion of this frontage—to the great danger, and frequently great damage, of passers-by. Deaths from street accidents were not unfrequent. But they were little heeded by the police, and rarely was any enquiry made concerning them.

The danger was increased when darkness and rain came on; the more so as the only means for carrying off the rain from the house was by projecting spouts from the roof and from every storey. These numerous cascades formed together a powerful cataract, while the central gutter would often be swollen into a rapid

rivulet, or even a river, carrying before it the accumulated dirt of months. In the daytime several planks fastened together would be thrown over the stream, forming a sort of rude and ready bridge. Where these were not placed, there was no help for either lady or gentleman indisposed or unable to wade across, but to be carried over the stream on the back or in the arms of some dirty, sturdy fellow, always in waiting, and willing to perform this service for two or three *sous*.

Boileau Despréaux, in his "Embarras de Paris," had little praise to bestow on the gay city in 1660. Dufresny and Montesquieu, sixty years later on, in the same satirical vein, make their Siamese and Persian speak no less unfavourably of it. Saint-Foix, Duclos, Mercier, Barbier, and other writers, even to the dawn of the revolutionary times, take up the theme in a similar strain.

To be freed from squalor and pestilence—to become, in its outward aspect, a cleanly, healthy city, as well as, socially, a rich, gay, and delightful one—monastery walls had yet to be demolished, and the rule of the Bourbon kings of France to end.

Notwithstanding, the population of Paris

had increased. But, as observed by the Marquis de Mirabeau (father of the great orator, who had so many schemes for regenerating France, but not one for managing his household), what became of the children ?—so few of them ever were seen. The mortality amongst children was, no doubt, fearful in those pent-up streets, where every noisome trade was carried on with impunity; one of the most thriving, and as offensive as any, the tallow-chandler's, being everywhere in full work. Still, few young children were seen, because all who could afford the expense had their infants reared in the country. The necessity for doing so then, if the parents studied their health, originated the custom that yet survives, though the necessity for it has passed away.

But the population of Paris was often considerably increased by immigrants. What names, anything but French, are now borne by some of the old families of France ?—Italian, German, Polish, English, Irish, Spanish. There was something attractive in the old city, in spite of its many shortcomings; and those who settled in it speedily became Parisians, both in their habits and feelings. On Sundays and *fete*

days they left the close streets, and took their pleasure in the various gardens and places of amusement beyond the city limits, or barriers. The air is light and stimulating there. It has a pleasant effect on the spirits, similar to that of good champagne, only far more abiding.

The sight of the offensively dirty streets by day, their gloom and danger at night, might well have deterred intending settlers from taking up their abode in them, and have repelled foreign visitors from Paris. But from the time of the regency foreign visitors flocked to it, and it was reputed the liveliest city in Europe.

One must remember that the nights were not always dark; that a torrent was not always rushing down from the tall, dilapidated dwellings, or a gulf stream always rolling through the grand central gutter. The silvery moonbeams sometimes peered down into the ins and outs of the nine hundred mazy streets, investing them with an air of mystery and romance.

The numerous signboards had then a singular effect. Many, indeed, were not boards at all; but figures of men and women and animals, or of such objects as the trader dwelt in. St. Anthony and the pig, at the pork-butchers, was

a frequent and appropriate sign, rudely carved, or brilliantly daubed. But whatever the sign, it was thrust as far as possible from the house, every shopkeeper striving for prominence. In the flickering light of the moon these signs—for instance, some tall, stately "Justice," with scales, denoting that good weight and good measure were dealt out there; some dignified St. Anthony; "the good woman," without her head; or a cavalier with drawn sword—often proved objects of terror to the timid, and to those who were strangers in the land. They were the continual cause of squabbles, though with little or no result, between the tradespeople and the police; their intrusion on the narrow space of the streets often making it difficult for carriages to pass each other.

One feels almost surprised to hear that there was a police, the need of reform being so glaring, and the utter neglect of every means for effecting one, equally so. Yet the police was a very respectable force, as far as numbers went; highly trained too, and remarkably vigilant. The head of it, the Lieutenant de Police, was always a man of distinction. To fill the post with ability, no ordinary qualifications were needed; and gene-

rally the right man seems to have been found for it, and to have acquitted himself of his duties *con amore;* the changes being fewer in this office than in any other in the government.

But of all who filled the post of Lieutenant de Police, the man whom nature seems specially to have destined for it was Marc René, Comte d'Argenson. He was appointed to succeed La Reynie, in 1699, by Louis XIV., and held the office until 1718, when he resigned. The system of secret police organized by him (his thousands of invisible agents being of both sexes, and of every station of life) was considered so perfect by his able successors, Hérault, Berryer, Sartines, Le Noir, and De Crome, by whom it was continued until the eve of the Revolution, that they could find nothing to add to or take from it, that did not in some way mar its perfection—so cleverly, wheel within wheel, was it regulated, like a wonderful piece of mechanism.

Saint-Simon asserts that there was not a resident in Paris, of whose habits and most private affairs d'Argenson could not obtain the fullest information at a few minutes' notice. His face was so repulsively ugly that it might with propriety "have belonged to one of the

judges of the infernal regions." It made him a terror not only to evil doers, but by the *sobriquet* it obtained for him "Le Damné," served also the nurses for frightening fractious, naughty children into being quiet and good.

It was that fearful scourge of humanity, the small-pox, which had made such havoc of d'Argenson's face. One would not be surprised to learn that he was tyrannical. For to become so disfigured as to be an object of disgust or terror to one's fellow creatures, is enough to turn sour every drop of the milk of human kindness, however abundantly it flow in the breast.

But this model Lieutenant de Police was one of the kindest, most considerate and humane of men; extremely witty and amusing also, and much sought after in society. One can imagine, however, that he was more feared in the *salons* than loved. He had numerous anecdotes generally to relate, always of nameless persons. And it is said, that he sometimes chose this way of putting people who were present on their guard, and who would understand his allusions, against an injudicious freedom of speech. There was no functionary of the State who

possessed so much real power as the Lieutenant de Police; and it does not appear that it was ever materially abused by any one of the six men to whom it was successively confided from 1699 to 1789.

Yet, at the best, this wonderfully organized system of police was but an elaborate political and social *espionnage* which could be tolerated only under a despotism. It was a prying into family concerns; a peering into private letters, even tracing the mysterious course of amorous intrigues, rather than the seeking out of crime and the adopting the readiest means for preventing or punishing it.

It is true that while diving into the concerns of persons who were accused of no crime, or gathering up in *cafés* and private *salons* stray words indiscreetly uttered (of no import probably at the time, but which were docketed and stowed away for use, if wanted) the secret agents sometimes stumbled on other matters, of which it might be desirable their chief should be informed. But on the whole, the working of Comte d'Argenson's vast and intricate system, served less to further the ends of justice, to maintain good order in the city, and to afford protection to the inhabitants, than to furnish a

pleasant dish of scandal for the amusement of his majesty every morning.

Louis XIV. delighted in it. The regent cared not for it; he gave too much cause for scandal himself. But young Louis XV., whom it was of course necessary to initiate in the mysteries of the secret police, was beginning to show a taste for reading other people's letters, and learning, thus surreptitiously, the private sayings and doings of the court and the *beau monde.*

Yet there were secrets that both d'Argenson and his successors kept religiously, as it is termed, that is, locked up in their own heart of hearts. For they were merciful men; their large experience having taught them the weakness of human nature, and especially the weakness to which poor woman is prone. So, as long as she did not interfere in politics, any other secrets a fair lady might have were safe in the keeping of the Lieutenant de Police.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Palais Royal Gardens.—Married, but Unattached, Couples. —Que voulez-vous? C'est la Mode.—Le Haute Bourgeoisie. — Ennobled Bourgeoises. — Summer Evening Strolls.—The Chestnut Avenue.—Expulsion of the Infanta. —Supplanting the Bishop.—The Regent's Daughters.— Mdlle. de Vermandois.—Portrait of Louis XV.—The Infanta. — The Rambouillet Circle. — Marie Leczinska.— L'Evêque de Fréjus.—The King's Preceptor.—The Royal Bride.—The Young Bridegroom.—The Queen's Dowry.

HOW poor, how tawdry, the most brilliant illumination of the trees of the Tuileries and Palais Royal, compared with the silvery lustre of the moonlit gardens, on a soft summer night! How delightful to saunter in that avenue of grand old chestnuts. The sky so intensely blue, the air so clear, that every glittering star seems to hang by an invisible thread from the vault of heaven.

It was on nights like this, and in these same gardens that, eighty years ago, Anne of Austria (who with the child Louis XIV. and Cardinal

Mazarin, then lived in the Palais Royal) used to promenade from midnight till two in the morning, chatting and laughing with the ladies and gentlemen of her household.

Some alterations have been made in the interval, both in the palace and gardens. The regent who, notwithstanding his lamentable excesses, was a man of much taste and culture, has left a very fine collection of pictures and objets d'art, as well as a museum of natural history. His pious successor, whose elevated notions of religion lead him to set a good example to his household, and to seek the favour of heaven for himself, by crawling from his rooms to his chapel, on his knees, is scarcely capable of appreciating the treasures of art he has inherited. The regent also enlarged and replanted the gardens, and built that fine *chateau d'eau*, which supplies the fountains both here and at the Tuileries.

How the falling drops and the feathery spray sparkle in the moonlight! One might fancy them a shower of diamonds, outvying those that glitter and flash in the ladies' dresses, and in the gentlemen's too—for there is a very grand company here. Forsaking the theatres and the *salons*, the *grandes dames* order their carriages,

and, escorted by their *amis intimes*, drive hither in the calm summer twilight, to gossip and flirt under the broad spreading trees. But when the moonbeams light up the scene, the fashionable promenade is thronged, and often the evening saunter is extended far into the night.

No lady has the bad taste to appear here with her husband. What would the world say to so *bourgeois*-like a proceeding? The gentleman himself would be highly amused at the idea of dancing attendance on his wife. He has, of course, other engagements; just as she has—metal more attractive elsewhere.

Should one of these fashionable, married, but unattached, couples meet, perchance, in the course of the evening, it will appear that they are on excellent terms. Note the *grande politesse* with which they exchange smiles and bows; surely it leaves nothing to desire. Even should it happen that the husband of the lady is escorting the wife of her own *ami intime*, the spectacle only becomes more interesting. From the *grandes reverences* of the ladies, and profoundly low bows of the gentlemen, they seem to say, "I wish you much joy of so pleasant a companion," and, pleased with the thought, pass smilingly on, each couple exchanging significant

glances when it turns its back on the other. "Can such things be and overcome us," etc., somebody exclaims. *Mais! Que voulez-vous? C'est la mode.*

Fashion, as all the world knows, is a tyrannical sovereign who has dethroned good taste without securing a firm grasp of its sceptre. But for good or for evil, in manners or dress, or whatever pertains to social life, the decrees of fashion, *coûte que coûte*, must be obeyed. In the matter of dress, what sacrifices are not the slaves of fashion willing to make to their deity! If a decree go forth that the fair sex, fat and thin, put themselves into *paniers*, or gigantic bakers'-baskets, whose modern equivalent was the recently-discarded balloon-like crinoline—how readily do old and young, rich and poor, hasten to obey.

If again, as in the present day, a kind of amphibious party-coloured garment, or "*demie culotte* with a mermaid tail," be the costume prescribed for general wear, immediately the requisite amount of immoral courage is mustered up, and both the obese and the scraggy, the tall and the short, appear in our streets thus—to say the least—unbecomingly arrayed.

At one time it was the fashion to be timid

and nervous, and to have fits of the vapours; to cultivate a fastidious and over-strained refinement of speech, amounting to affectation. At another, the younger ladies are dauntless, daring, and afraid of nothing, and affect the slang of the stable. However, let it pass, *c'est la mode;* a change will occur by-and-by, and, it may be hoped, for the better. But a truce to these sage reflections. Ere we grow melancholy, we will return to the company in the gardens.

A decree of 1720 forbade the *bourgeoisie* to wear diamonds, pearls, or other jewels, or to use either gold or silver plate; it was hoped that they would exchange these superfluities for shares in the Royal Bank. The decree has been but little regarded, you will observe.

There are ladies here of the *haute bourgeoisie* who, not only in refinement of manners, but in elegance and richness of *toilette*, might well be ranked with the most distinguished of the *haute noblesse.* Indeed, several have lately been promoted to the honour—if honour it may be termed—of marrying into noble houses. For the Système Law, without having actually ruined them, left many old French families in circumstances so extremely embarrassed, that,

as it was customary to say, "*Il fallait rengraisser leurs terres*"—in other words, retrieve their losses by marrying the heir of the encumbered estates to the richly endowed heiress of a wealthy *bourgeois*. There was nothing that derogated from the dignity of the noble in such an alliance — the high descent of the family shedding its lustre on the bride, effacing the stigma of her plebeian birth, and conferring nobility on her children.

The ennobled *dames bourgeoises*, of course, are entitled to avail themselves of the privileges of the elevated class into which they have been so graciously received; and very readily they do so. Instances have been known of their having gambled away, in a very short time, all the wealth brought by marriage into the husband's noble family—the "*ami intime*" securing a very fair share of it. But when *bourgeoise* marries *bourgeois* you will rarely fail to meet her enjoying a quiet walk, or a country ramble, with no other "intimate friends" than her husband and children.

On calm summer evenings, all who are not too weary and toilworn—for it is a hard-working city no less than a gay one—leave their close, noisome dwellings, and come to these

gardens—or to those of the Tuileries; to the Place Royale; the boulevards (the Champs Elysées were not then planted), and wherever any open space occurs, to refresh themselves with a stroll in the cool evening air. The French look so much at home when sitting out-of-doors, in their public gardens, or outside their *cafés*. One can scarcely wonder that casual visitors from a country whose people are of a less expansive nature, and in whom the social instinct is much less developed, were long under the delusion that the French had no idea of a home, and of that mythical thing the English call comfort.

The close quarters in which, by royal edict, a century and a half ago it was enacted that the inhabitants of Paris should dwell, no doubt induced the habit of congregating on every opportunity wherever a breath of the fresh air of heaven could be had. It led also to the rapid increase in the number of *cafés* which took place at that time, and superseded the *cabarets*, formerly the resort of literary men. Now, with the exception of a few, who, like Piron and Crébillon, prefer wine and beer to coffee and cocoa, they are frequented only by a noisy company of a very inferior grade.

At the period now in question the garden of the Palais Royal is an exceedingly attractive one, well laid out and planted, the trees generally fine, and the chestnut avenue in full beauty. It is the promenade especially favoured by the *beau monde.* There are seats here and there, and all fully occupied. A numerous company saunters up and down, and there is an immense deal of talking and laughing. Conversation is carried on in no very low key, though all are aware that the watchful eyes and the listening ears of the Lieutenant de Police and his myrmidons are always and everywhere open. "Remember, that wherever you are, there am I!" said Hérault, d'Argenson's successor, to one whom he warned in private of the danger of being indiscreetly communicative in public.

But when and where since that remote time when Eve, our first mother, flourished, was it ever known that restraint could be imposed on the tongue of any one of her daughters inclined to prattle? The theme now on every lady's lips is the expulsion, as they term it, of the young Infanta and the king's possibly approaching marriage. It is discussed, too, with wonderful freedom, as are its originators, M. le Duc

and Madame de Prie. We learn from these ladies, so indignant, apparently, and all so eager at once to express an opinion on the subject, that the young Infanta, now in her seventh year, has been sent back to Spain. This step has been taken suddenly and abruptly. But by way of soothing the wounded feelings of her parents, orders were given that the discarded little princess should receive on her journey home the honours due to a queen of France.

The reason alleged for her return is similar to that conveyed to the Emperor Maximilian in the message of Charles VIII., when he sent back to Vienna the little Austrian princess to whom he had been betrothed in his childhood, and who also had been brought up in France. He was twenty-two, he said, and desirous of marrying, but thought a bride in her twelfth year too young for him. (His choice had fallen on a princess of sixteen, Anne, reigning Duchess of Brittany, the duchy by this marriage becoming annexed to the French monarchy.) This probably is the precedent of which M. le Duc and his mistress availed themselves when, with the view of displacing Bishop Fleury, his influence being paramount with the young king—now in his fifteenth year—it occurred

to them that by marrying this youth to a princess of their own selection, they would be able to supplant the bishop and rule the king through her.

The Infanta had nearly reached the Spanish capital before the king and queen were aware of her departure from France. Letters announcing it were forwarded to the Abbé de Livry-Sanguin, French Ambassador at Lisbon, with orders to pass over to Spain and deliver them to Philip V. The Abbé is now returned to Paris, to make report of the kind of reception he met with at Madrid. Secrets will ooze out, and the Abbé's story, which M. le Duc would fain have suppressed, is the principal theme of conversation this fine June evening with every sauntering group in the gardens.

"The Abbé wept," says one. "He threw himself at the king's feet when he made known the object of his mission."

"Of course he did," is the reply; "it is but the ordinary etiquette."

"Yes, but weeping is not. And the king, when he knew how great an affront had been put on him and the Infanta, wept himself. He has but lately left the monastery, as you are aware, to resume the crown of Spain, the Pope,

on the death of his son from small-pox, having absolved him of his vow of abdication. He was so deeply moved that he refused to receive the letters from the Abbé. The queen was sent for. The letters were delivered to her, and she read them with much emotion. The Abbé declares—I had it from himself—that he was heartily ashamed of his mission, and surprised that the bishop did not prevent it."

"*Chut, chut!*" exclaim the more discreet listeners.

But the well-informed oracle continues: "De Livry was ordered to leave the king's presence, and to quit the country without delay. All Frenchmen in Spain have had orders to do the same."

"And where is Mdlle. Beaujolais, the betrothed of Don Carlos?"

"She is coming back; the marriage is broken off. Her sister, the young widowed queen, is with her. They have proved themselves worthy daughters of the regent. Philip sends them both out of Spain in the same carriages and with the same escort that served for the ignominious expulsion of the Infanta from France."

"Have you seen or heard of the Marquise

lately?" enquires one lady of another, in an undertone.

"*Ma chère*, she is scouring the country in search of a queen of France."

"I heard that she had been to Fontevraud, and was very haughtily received there."

"Yes, she fancied that Mademoiselle de Vermandois, though five years older than the king, might answer her purpose as queen. But the marquise met with a rebuff that not only upset her plans, but disconcerted her greatly. The princess expressed much surprise that her brother's mistress should presume to visit her. When M. le Duc heard of it, he got into one of his amiable tempers. 'Let her then,' he said, 'remain where she is, and rule the nuns of Fontevraud.'"

"But Fleury?"

"Fleury declines to interfere in any project of marriage; but it is certain that no marriage will take place of which he disapproves."

"And the king?"

The reply is a general laugh. Somebody has even the hardihood to whisper—

"Timide, imbecile, farouche,
Jamais Louis n'avait dit mot;
Pour tonner il ouvre la bouche.
Est-ce un tyran? Non, c'est un sot."

The ladies are indignant. The young king is declared to be the handsomest youth in France. He has grown wonderfully during the last two years. His health is more robust, and he gives promise of being the handsomest man in his kingdom. "*L'œil du roi*"—a deep sapphire blue—is beginning to be a favourite colour with the ladies, outrivalling *bleu du ciel.*

The portrait of Louis XV. by J. B. Vanloo, who painted Louis XIV. in his old age, is that of a noble-looking youth. The artist would willingly have painted a flattering picture, but found that the nearest approach he could make to a faithful copy of his model would be the nearest approach to physical beauty and the best proof of his skill. There is grace in the attitude of the youthful king, and an air of command. It is a well composed and very pleasing picture.

Though still diffident and silent among persons with whom he is little acquainted, the king's manners at this period are much improved. He is far less *brusque;* but, owing to his natural shyness, appears most to advantage in the small social circle of the Comtesse de Toulouse, where his extreme reserve disappears. It is at Rambouillet that he has

acquired a certain courtly ease and chivalric bearing, which may well entitle him to the appellation "*parfait gentilhomme*," while they induce many sanguine persons to expect great things from him when a few more years shall have passed over his head.

What a pity that the bishop, who at any moment could dismiss M. le Duc from his post, should have allowed him and his mistress to send away the Infanta. She was a wonderfully observant little maiden, and her remarks were astonishingly shrewd for so young a child. She quite understood that she was to be a queen, and seemed sensible of the dignity of her position. Her *fiancé* very seldom took notice of her. Excessive timidity restrained him from evincing any great *empressement*, either towards her or ladies generally. He is, indeed, as yet, so little gallant, that he usually avoids *le beau sexe*. But when he becomes the object of attentions which fair dames already are anxious to pay him, he is remarkably polite and deferential.

Fleury's own indolence and love of ease have encouraged the similar tendencies of his pupil. It is to be feared, that until actually compelled by force of circumstances to use the great power he holds in his hands, he will make no

attempt to put it in action, either for his pupil's or the country's benefit. He is as fond of the Rambouillet circle as is the young king himself, whom he usually accompanies on his weekly visits to the château. The bishop is very socially inclined, and *très spirituel*, and the tone of the society he meets in the *salon* of the comtesse greatly pleases him. The Comte de Toulouse, who has seen some naval service, is of less studious habits, perhaps somewhat less pious, but decidedly of more genial temperament than his brother Du Maine.

The count has an only son, the Duc de Penthièvre, some years younger than the king. The domesticated, bourgeois-like life of the count and countess, and their attachment to each other, provoke the mirth and ridicule of the *beau monde*. Nevertheless, they are greatly and generally esteemed.

Fleury may have hoped that in their society the king would fall into similar tastes and habits. To a certain extent he has done so, and the dissolute young nobles now lying in wait in the hope of leading him into libertine courses, will probably find considerable difficulty in goading him into vice.

But, *en attendant*, what has become of the

marquise? She is a wonderful woman of business, the daughter of a financier, and on very intimate terms with one of the brothers Pâris-Duvernay, who assists her in governing the State. There are rumours that she has at last found a queen who has been accepted at a "*conseil privé;* that Fleury has not objected, and that the king, finding he cannot escape matrimony, has quietly submitted to his fate.

The rumour proves to be fact. M. le Duc summons the *Grand' chambre*, and Louis XV. announces his marriage with Marie Leczinska, daughter of Stanislaus Leczinski, ex-king of Poland.

What an outcry! what a general disappointment! "The daughter of a poor fugitive Polish noble, living in obscurity on a small pension from France, to be preferred to an Infanta of Spain!" Had she been of a more suitable age, it would have been some consolation. Surely, say the ladies, there are young princesses in Europe, of fifteen or sixteen, from amongst whom a more appropriate choice might have been made, than of this Polish lady in her twenty-third year, to share the throne of a boy-monarch not yet sixteen! "Madame de Prie never did look to consequences," it was

remarked. But why should the king accept a bride of her selection? Is it really true then, as whispered about, "*Que ce joli garçon n'est qu'un sot.*"

And is Fleury also *un sot?* He had, it was supposed, but little ambition. He was seventy-two years of age, and not particularly active, though by no means infirm. But so far from being *un sot*, he was a man of talent and considerable culture, unless he may have been considered one for his persistent refusal of high ecclesiastical dignities, because of his unwillingness to take upon himself any fatiguing or responsible functions. His bishopric of Fréjus he resigned with as little delay as possible; much to the regret of his clergy. For by his economy, and conciliatory spirit, which—as remarked by Voltaire—were the predominant parts of his character, he had done much good in his diocese.

He gave, as a reason for resigning, that the state of his health (which was generally good) did not permit him to discharge satisfactorily the duties of his office. The real motive appears to have been the distance of Fréjus (near Cannes) from the capital, and its unattractiveness, at that period, as a residence.

"As soon as he saw his wife," he said, "he was disgusted with his marriage." In a letter to Cardinal Quirini, he signed himself, "Fleury, Evêque de Fréjus, par l'indignation divine." His friend, Villeroi, suggested to Louis XIV. his appointment as preceptor to his youthful heir. Fleury, however, would have willingly declined it, but was not permitted.

The bishop seems to have been in some degree imbued with the pleasure-loving spirit of the age; though far too courtly to accept the philosophical ideas that were slowly gaining ground in society. His delight was in witty conversation, and *piquant badinage* with the ladies in the *salons;* but like Massillon, he declined discussion on theology. He was very fond of children; and at Rambouillet the little Infanta, who was much attached to him, used to sit on his knees while he told her fairy tales. Such was the man who for ten years had been preceptor to the king, who, on his part, confided in, and loved him both as a parent and a friend.

Fleury had, doubtless, his reasons for consenting to, or, rather, not opposing, the marriage of his royal pupil; therefore, the Polish princess became Queen of France, notwithstanding the

generally expressed disapproval of the nation. Perhaps 1 one was surprised at this unlooked-for elevation so much as poor Stanislaus, her father. More than one version has been given of the manner in which he received the news of this freak of fortune in his favour—for Marie Leczinska was scarcely asked in marriage; Stanislaus was informed merely that she was accepted. He is said to have kept this fine piece of news a secret for some days; to have revealed it cautiously, fearing its effect on his wife and daughter. Another, and more probable story, is that he no sooner knew it than he rushed into the room, and, with true Polish impetuousness, exclaimed, "On your knees! on your knees, and thank God"—himself setting the example. "Recalled to Poland?" they cried, excitedly. "No, no! far better — far better! Marie is to be Queen of France!"

She was married by proxy at Strasburg Cathedral on the 15th of August, 1725. The king's miniature, set in diamonds, had been presented to her; his beauty and manly appearance highly extolled, and a glowing account set before her of the pleasures awaiting her in France. But the intense misery she witnessed on her journey—petitions and appeals meeting

her at every town and village, an inconceivable amount of wretchedness being then general in the provinces—so deeply affected her that she prayed on her arrival that, instead of expending money on *fêtes*, relief might be sent to the suffering people.

The public purse was very empty just then, and little money to be had for either *fêtes* or charity. The royal marriage took place on the 4th of September, and there was but scant rejoicing of any sort. The young bridegroom was immensely bored, and annoyed at the part assigned to him—so greatly did he dislike appearing prominently in public. The bride was far from being beautiful, but she was fresh and fair, and looked younger than she was. Her figure was graceful, and she was gentle and amiable. The bishop was kind, and appeared well satisfied (he was already aware that he had no feminine rival to fear), and Louis was therefore resigned. The ladies, of course, found much to criticize in their new queen, and laughed exceedingly at her *bourgeois* French, which she had acquired from an illiterate waiting maid.

Madame de Prie became Dame du Palais de la Reine, and having succeeded in placing Marie

Leczinska on the throne, was now looking forward to the speedy expulsion of the bishop and a long usurpation of power for herself and M. le Duc.

This marriage, at the time so generally disapproved, eventually added a fine province to the kingdom—the Duchy of Lorraine. Since the marriage of Anne of Brittany with Charles VIII., no previous queen had brought a dowry of equal value. A stipulated sum of money, only partly paid, or not paid at all, had been the usual marriage portion of the foreign princesses who became queens of France.

CHAPTER XVII.

Sledging at Versailles.—La Dame du Palais.—The Queen's Secluded Life.—Piety of the Queen and King.—The Sound of the Hunting Horn.—The Good Old Days.—The Rain and the Sunshine.—Intrigues of Mdme. de Prie.—The Bishop Retires to Issy.—A Domestic Tempest.—A Scene at the Theatre.—Two Lettres-de-Cachet.—Pâris-Duvernay.—Fortune's Wheel Moves Round.—An Old Normandy Château.—Death of Madame de Prie.

HE winter of 1725—1726 was of extreme severity in France, and distress and suffering were frightful in the provinces. Many of the *petite noblesse* worked as hired labourers on lands they had once owned, and starvation and disease prevailed amongst the peasantry. The financial difficulties of the State were increasing, and the pressure of taxation was so great that murmuring was rife throughout the country, and it was found difficult to collect the imposts.

But neither the rigour of the season nor the penury of the exchequer was an evil that

seemed to be felt at Versailles. There, the clear crisp air rang with merry laughter; with the jingling music of silver bells; with the sound of the swift pattering feet of small fleet horses, that appeared almost to fly with joyous parties of sledgers, over the ice-bound earth, the frozen lakes, and ornamental waters of the park. Polish fashions had become the rage; and the weather was well suited for the warmly-lined polonaise of velvet and fur, the furred casquette, and furred Polish boots, which the queen had brought into vogue with the sledges.

Every courtier had his richly ornamented sledge. The king and queen, with the ladies and gentlemen of the court, amused themselves greatly, while the novelty of this exciting sport lasted. The queen first appeared in a sledge formed like a sea-shell. It was supported by Tritons, and rose-crowned cupids were grouped around it. Two fiery little steeds were attached by embroidered crimson leather harness, from which hung innumerable tinkling silver bells. The shell was lined with crimson velvet, and had cushions of the same. The king and queen, enveloped in rich sables, passed thus equipped through the park of Versailles and over its frozen waters. The courtiers were not

slow to follow their example; but sledging did not survive its first season.

Among this gay throng, none was more brilliant than Madame de Prie; none more triumphant than M. le Duc; for on none did the queen smile more graciously. She regarded them as her own and her father's benefactors, as entitled to her warmest gratitude, and to such favour as her influence with the king might be able to obtain for them. The *dame du palais*, meanwhile, sought to strengthen this feeling, by her constant endeavour to please the royal lady she had raised to the throne; and, thus, insinuated herself into her confidence and secured her affection.

The king had now entered his seventeenth year, and had been six months married. Though evincing none of the enthusiasm of boyish love, he appeared, in his apathetic way, to be pleased with his pleasant-tempered, gentle, and unassuming bride.

Intellectually, Marie Leczinska was not highly gifted, and her education had been but a scanty one; she spoke French fluently enough, but as an uneducated person. It was the despair of the academician, Monriff, a great purist, who was her reader and instructor in the French

language. She did her best to overcome the faults which, uncorrected, had grown into habits, but never quite succeeded. The king, who spoke, when he made up his mind to speak, with perfect correctness, and with a certain elegance of diction derived from his preceptor, was often amused by the expressions used by the queen, and the singular and unusual sense in which she employed many words. He, however, found her society sufficiently interesting to induce him to saunter away in her apartments a few of the many idle hours that hung so heavily on his hands. His visits to Rambouillet continued as usual, but it would seem that the queen did not accompany him thither. She lived in nearly as much seclusion as when dwelling in her obscure home at Weissenburg. No grand public *fêtes*, no court revels, had celebrated the marriage of Louis XV. Not many persons could then remember the public entry into Paris of Louis XIV. and his Spanish bride, and the festivities that followed. But tradition told of their splendour and exaggerated it; and the pleasure-loving Parisians, comparing the imaginary past with the reality of the present, believed that the old state of things must have been better than the new.

The queen had been reared in the most superstitious observance of the outward ceremonies of religion. Her great kindness of heart prompted her to indulgence and forbearance towards the fair but frail ladies of the French court. But had she possessed judgment and sufficient strength of mind to suppress the devotee and, while conforming in some measure to circumstances, to play more conspicuously, and with some spirit, the part of queen; her influence would probably have effected a reform in the manners of the court—when, as a penitent constantly on her *prie-dieu*, or shut up in her oratory, she inspired only sneering pity, or the profane laugh.

The king never omitted morning prayer, mass, and confession. There his religion ended. These duties performed he went to his gardening, or his turning. The latter was a new accomplishment, and he had succeeded in it remarkably well—making very presentable snuff-boxes from pieces of the roots of trees. But nowhere was he so free from *ennui* as at Rambouillet. A lively and youthful company was usually assembled there. Politics and affairs of State were subjects prohibited in the *salon* of the Comtesse. A word or look from

the Count at once put an end to them, if, perchance, either designedly or otherwise, such topics seemed likely to be brought, or to glide, on the *tapis.*

But the chase in the forests of Rambouillet was Louis' favourite diversion. The sound of the hunting horn, the baying of the dogs, the impatience of his steed for the sport, all delighted him. They dispelled the languor and inertness that usually oppressed him, and which arose from a singularly indolent state of mind rendering him wholly incapable of sustaining an interest in any pursuit or amusement, unless excitement were kept up by continual movement and change. When weather permitted, the ladies joined these *parties de chasse,* arrayed in blue and green riding-dresses, with lace cravats and ruffles, and hats *à la mousquetaire,* or *à la Garde Française.*

At a certain shady spot in the forest, a substantial luncheon was always laid out, servants having been sent on before, with hampers of wine and provisions, to prepare this feast of all the good things in season. They were pleasant repasts. The exhilaration of the chase, the fresh, bracing air, the champagne, the *badinage, jeux d'ésprit,* and gay *propos,* moved even the

moody young king to brightness and laughter. Usually there was a dance on his return to château; then *thé à l'Anglaise;* followed, by-and-by, by supper; for this was especially an eating and drinking age, as well as a singing and dancing one. Sometimes, after the dancing, just a little gambling took place; for Louis liked, and excelled in, both. And if it was a moonlight night, there was often a riding party home—well armed, of course; for there was a chance of encountering the famous highwayman Cartouche and his brigand-band; just as in the good old days in merry England.

But while young Louis XV. and his court were amusing themselves, distress in the country was increasing. The populace of Paris and its faubourgs were crying for bread, and every necessary of life had become scarcer and dearer. Prayers were daily offered up in the churches, and priestly processions paraded the streets. The silver shrine of Ste. Geneviève was, by order of the Parliament, carried through the city by barefooted priests intoning prayers, and followed by a bareheaded multitude, who invoked the intercession of the saints. Alas! neither prayers nor processions availed. No manna descended from heaven.

"*Qu'ils sont bêtes avec leur châsse!*" exclaimed Madame de Prie. "They know not that it is I who make both the rain and the sunshine." Forthwith the order is issued to bring into the market the grain (obtained chiefly by exaction) which had been hoarded up from the moment that the probability of a scarcity was foreseen. It is offered now to the hungry people, at prices that put money into the purses of the minister and his mistress. This is the sunshine she sheds on the starving populace. Murmurs loud and deep reach the ears of Fleury, and petitions are addressed to the king through his hands. Madame de Prie, the bishop informs M. le Duc, must be dismissed from the court; her influence and interference in public affairs being prejudicial to the interests of the State.

The lady is highly incensed. "It is not she who will leave the court, but the bishop who shall receive his *congé*." The partizans of each do their best to eject the other. Madame de Prie and M. le Duc feel sure of the victory. Have they not the wealthy financier, Pâris-Duvernay, to support them; also the queen among their partizans? But Fleury is not to be drawn into a struggle for power with the mistress of M. le Duc, whom he has suffered for

a time to be his *locum tenens.* He allows them to work out their own downfall; and it is not long delayed.

Yielding to the wishes of his preceptor that he would give some attention to the affairs of government, the king was accustomed to spend a short time in his apartment daily, engaged there with his first minister; the bishop being always present. When the public business was disposed of, M. le Duc withdrew, much to his annoyance; for the king remained to write, or to sign, under the bishop's direction, any documents relating to ecclesiastical affairs—the bishop having the independent charge of Church matters. It occurred to the duke and his mistress, that as the king was more bored by these morning sittings than interested in them, he might be enticed to hold his conference with his minister in the apartment of the queen. Her majesty and her *dame du palais* could then amuse him; while the minister, occupying himself with the State's concerns, would make no demand on his sovereign's attention — the bishop, of course, being presumed to be absent. The queen consented; her friends assuring her that it was a most necessary and advisable course.

The king was indifferent to this change in the council chamber. But the bishop though neither informed of it nor invited to attend, yet did not fail to appear as usual, to assist his pupil with his advice. It was determined to exclude him. The duke's opinion was not asked on ecclesiastical affairs; the bishop's should not be accepted on secular ones. Accordingly, when next he presented himself, entrance to the queen's apartments was refused him. He withdrew, but said naught. His royal pupil noticed his absence, and, like the bishop, uttered no remark. He was always sparing of his words, and very rarely indeed carried away by feeling to forget the lessons of dissimulation which, as a necessary part of the education of kings, he had thoroughly mastered.

The *séance* ended, the king seeks his preceptor. He is not to be found. He has left Versailles. "Finding that his majesty has no further occasion for his services or his advice, he has retired to Issy"—to that little *maison de campagne* that may be called the bishop's *boudoir;* for thither he always betakes himself when, not choosing to complain in words, it pleases him to assume the *boudeur.*

Now is Louis XV. roused, for the first time

in his life, to play the absolute monarch and the indignant husband. His deepest feelings are his great reverence and almost filial affection for bishop Fleury. He learns, on further inquiry, that his preceptor has been treated with disrespect; the attendants in the ante-room of the queen's apartments having denied him entrance. His anger is extreme. M. le Duc, whom he already disliked, strives vainly by excuses and apologies to appease him. With his own hand he has at once to sit down and write the king's commands to the bishop to return to Versailles; adding pressing entreaties from himself (for he foresees a storm gathering over his head) that he will make no delay. The queen is reproached with a vivacity that none hitherto had thought the king capable of, while she replies only by tears to her incensed young husband, whose displeasure is by no means subdued by her weeping.

This domestic tempest, originating in a palace intrigue, was discussed with much interest in courtly *salons*. It raised the vain hopes of would-be candidates for the post of *maîtresse-en-titre*. It was the subject of conversation with all who dwelt at Versailles. "I remarked," says Voltaire, "that this domestic difference

made a deeper impression on people's minds than the news of the war, which was afterwards so calamitous to France and to Europe. There was much agitation and questioning; vague and mistrustful replies. Some desired a revolution; others feared it; but all were alarmed."

Baron was to play Britannicus that same evening at the Palace Theatre. Voltaire was there when the king and queen arrived—an hour later, he says, than usual; the queen's eyes showing evident traces of recent weeping. The popular repugnance to the king's marriage was not yet overcome, and when, in the course of the play, the words—

"Que tardez-vous, seigneur, à la répudier?"

were pronounced by Narcissus, almost all who were present, we are told, turned their eyes on the queen, to observe the effect on her—a curiosity more indiscreet than malicious.

On the following day, Fleury returned to Versailles. He took no advantage of this opportunity of revenging himself on his opponent, and uttered no complaint whatever. He was, in fact, the head of the State, and with that he was content. Very soon after, however, the king when setting out for Rambouillet,

where he had bought a small château or hunting seat, invited M. le Duc to pass the night there, and to hunt with him in the morning. He desired him to follow without delay, that he might not be kept waiting for supper. But no sooner had the king left Versailles than the Duc de Charost, ex-governor, and now Capitaine des Gardes, entered the apartment of M. le Duc, and, delivering a letter from the king, arrested him. Having received his sword, an *exempt des gardes* was summoned to convey him to his place of exile, which in this case, was a very pleasant one—his father's residence, the Château de Chantilly—there to remain during his majesty's pleasure.

An order to retire to her estate of Courbe-Épine in Normandy, was at the same time delivered to Madame de Prie. Regarding this merely as a temporary eclipse, she took her departure from Versailles in very good spirits. To bear her company during the supposed temporary retirement, Madame du Deffant accompanied her. Having quarrelled with both her husband and her *ami intime,* she chose to share her friend's exile until she could make up her mind to which of them she would be reconciled.

The wealthy Pâris-Duvernay, who had assisted the State in the arrangements consequent on the failure of the Système Law, was lodged in the Bastille for a time. The king also summoned a "Conseil extraordinaire," to inform his ministers that he, and not the financiers, would henceforth be the head of the State, and that business would be transacted in the apartments of M. de Fleury. That he, in fact, now sixteen-and-a-half years old, was about to reign, and his preceptor, at seventy-three, to govern.

The Duchesse d'Alincourt succeeded to the vacant post of *dame du Palais de la Reine.* The beautiful, and lately married, Duchesse de Boufflers, grand-daughter of Maréchal de Villeroi, and afterwards Duchesse de Luxembourg, was another of her ladies. The queen was informed of these changes, in a letter from the king, also that the orders of M. de Fleury were to be obeyed by her as implicitly as his own. She submitted, of course, and with good grace; abstaining entirely for the future from any attempt to interfere in affairs of State. Yet she appears to have been really displeased with a change which the nation, generally, greatly approved. Fleury would not accept the title

of first minister. All power was, however, in his hands.

After the disgraceful administration of such men as the infamous Dubois; the incompetent M. le Duc, ruled by Madame de Prie and Duvernay, the French people hailed with delight the accession to power of one in whose wisdom and justice they had confidence; and under whose auspices they looked for the return of order in the government and some respect for morality and decency of manners.

A cardinal's hat, which, owing to the intrigues of M. le Duc, had been for some time withheld, soon after made its appearance, and Fleury received it from the hands of the king. When the cardinal, wearing the insignia of his newly-conferred dignity, presented himself for the ceremony of thanking the king, the young monarch affectionately embraced him in the presence of the court, and, as Duclos remarks, openly expressed as much pleasure as the new cardinal probably inwardly felt.

And thus the tables were turned, and fortune's wheel moved round. A few persons went into exile, and many were recalled from it. The old Maréchal de Villeroi again visited Paris, to die in peace there in his eighty-eighth

year. The legitimated princes were reinstated in all the privileges of which they had been deprived, except the right of succeeding to the throne, and the little Duchesse du Maine was made happy again by this triumph.

When Madame de Prie heard of these changes, and—which affected her most—that she was *dame du palais* no longer, she comprehended that henceforth the favour of the queen could avail her nothing, and that she would be received at Versailles no more. Intense grief, the madness of despair, took possession of her mind. Pilon, M. le Duc's physician, was sent for. He supposed her to be suffering from the complaint then in fashion with fine ladies—a nervous attack, vapours being superseded by nerves. He treated her as a *malade imaginaire ;* of disappointed ambition he knew naught. Nor could he have ministered to a mind diseased, had he even had the discernment to suspect the existence of that malady.

And so the once brilliant Madame de Prie—"*une créature celeste*," according to d'Argenson; "wily as a serpent, beautiful, but not so harmless, as the dove," say others—pined away in her old Normandy château. And a living tomb, indeed, it must have been in those days—espe-

cially to one fond of splendour and power; one from whom France had accepted a queen of her choosing, and who for nearly three years had ruled the court of Versailles. After fifteen months of exile she died, at the age of twenty-nine. D'Argenson says, she announced, as a sort of prophecy, that her death would take place on a certain day, and very nearly at a certain hour named by her. Two days before the time stated, she secretly sent away her diamonds —which were of immense value—to some person at Rouen. When her confidential messenger returned, Madame de Prie was no more. She had taken poison of a violent kind, and her sufferings before death were excessive.

It is mentioned, as a reproach to her, that she left by will to M. le Duc nothing but a mediocre diamond, of about the value of five thousand *écus*.

The valuable casket of diamonds and jewels she secretly disposed of, was believed to have been destined for Pâris-Duvernay.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Fleury's Economy.—Mimi and Titite.—"Notre Toulouse."—Mdlle. de Vichy-Chamroud.—A Singular Caprice.—The Epidemic—*Ennui*.—An Interesting Couple.—A Desolate Normandy Château.—The Ménagerie in Eclipse.—Emerging from the Cloud.—"Le Poème de la Ligue."—A Pious Theft.—A Noble Chevalier.—"Rohan je suis."—Homage to Madame du Deffant.—"Adieu, la belle France."

NO festivities; no amusements. Dulness as depressing as in the gloomiest days of Louis XIV. has succeeded the dissipations of the regency. Those who shared in the pleasures of that corrupt society are in despair. They looked for gaiety, and a perpetual round of *fêtes* and diversions, on the young monarch's emancipation from the control of tutors and governors. But, from the time when roused, by M. le Duc's conduct, to that temporary display of energy and authority which led to so entire a change in the *personnel* of the government, he had fallen back to the monoto-

nous and secluded mode of life most congenial to his apathetic temperament.

Fleury, secure against court intrigues, passed much of his time at Issy, cogitating in retirement on the best means of maintaining peace with neighbouring kingdoms, and in devising schemes for economizing the revenue. Like the great Sully, whom in this he resembled, he was willing to put money into the treasury, but grumbled exceedingly at any undue demands on it. But while he reduced the customary lavish expenditure of the king's household, and gained his docile pupil's willing assent to it, he also abolished the most oppressive of the taxes laid upon the people by his predecessor. This, on the one hand, displeased the courtiers; they would not recognize a necessary or wise economy, but parsimony only, in the diminished pomp and parade of the court. But, on the other, the timely relief afforded a suffering people by the removal of a portion of its burden of imposts, gained the confidence and goodwill of the nation. It gave renewed buoyancy to long-cherished hopes that with the reign of Louis XV. the despotism which marked the rule of the *Grand Monarque*, and the flagrant depra-

vity that disgraced the regency, would give place to a more beneficent administration of public affairs, and a better example of social life. The prudent, moderate, and upright minister, on whom the young king's free choice had first fallen, was a guarantee of the monarch's desire for the welfare and prosperity of his people. The pleasure he evidently took in the society of his pious and amiable queen, surely also boded that the reign of domestic virtue in France had begun at Versailles, and in the palace where it had hitherto been a stranger. But such expectations were then the jest of the *salons*.

"We are to have a Mimi and Titite at Versailles, I hear." The lady who speaks, laughs in that sneering, cynical way so characteristic of the Marquise du Deffant.

It is she who throws out this remark for the amusement of the company assembled in the *salon* of her apartment in the Rue St. Dominique. And very amusing they find it; for Mimi and Titite are names which, in derision, the *beau monde* has given to the Comte and Comtesse de Toulouse. They actually so far forget what is due to society as to appear in public together, unaccompanied by intimate

friend of either sex. Often they may be met sauntering in the grounds of their château, just like any poor peasant couple on their estate; or, again, taking a quiet canter in the forest, with no other companion than the young Duc de Penthièvre. This son *la haute société* has christened "notre Toulouse"—it being a *bourgeois* habit to speak of the heir of the house by the father's surname. M. et Mdme. Toitot-Leblond would call their eldest or only son, "notre Toitot"—reversing the English mode, "our Jack" or "our Dick," instead of "our Jackson, or Dickson."

But as many laughs are raised just now, at the expense of the marquise, in other *salons*, as by the wit and the cynicism with which she attacks, in her own, the follies of others. She knows it, however, and is unaffected by it; for she knows that the dear friends who compose her society are as little inclined to spare her as she to spare them, when it is a question between a reputation and an epigram. Were it otherwise, what would become of *esprit?* and hers is, *par excellence, le salon des beaux-esprits*, and of the new school of philosophism—though not arrived at the period of its greatest celebrity and influence. The marquise has scarcely yet taken

up the sceptre of a queen of society, and constituted herself the protectress of philosophy and the philosophers.

At this time she is about thirty-one or thirty-two years of age, and, professedly, "*la femme de France la plus ennuyée.*" A sceptic and cynic she has been from her childhood. She is of a noble but impoverished Burgundian family—De Vichy-Chamroud. Having no fortune, her parents were glad to marry her to the Marquis du Deffant, many years her senior, and far from wealthy, but who is said to have been an estimable and honourable man, of whom there were few in those days. He was sincerely in love with her also, and possessed at least a position in society and a home to offer, such as a girl without a dowry could hardly hope for in France.

Emancipated by marriage from all inconvenient restraints, the marquise arrived in Paris, and figured prominently amongst the fair ladies of the regent's court. She was less remarkable for beauty than caustic wit—a quality which first attracted the regent, but, eventually, an injudicious application of it was the means of her losing his favour. The poor marquis, who appears to have been as humble

and obedient a husband as any lady could desire, was the passive victim of his young wife's caprice, and, even worse than caprice, bad temper and discontent. She entirely discarded him at last—preferring the exclusive society of her *ami intime.*

She had already begun to play the part of an *ennuyée*, therefore could not long support the society of her friend: and as she at that time succeeded to an annuity of four thousand *écus*, she sought a reconciliation with the marquis, and proposed, as advantageous to both, that they should unite their incomes, and, giving up friendship, live together in *bourgeois* fashion. The marquis was delighted with the idea, and acceded without hesitation to her proposal. Her friends, Mdmes. de Parabère, Aïssé, de Prie, de Tencin, and their circle generally, were much amused at the singularity of this caprice. Their laughter changed not her purpose; nor was she moved from it by a torrent of reproaches from her forsaken cicisbeo. This innovation—the *ami intime*, or domestic lover, being a recognized institution—was a really bold step, which might have brought about the abolition of the nuisance of intimate friends generally, but for that terrible malady—*ennui.*

For the space of two months all went on smoothly, even happily, as far as the marquis was concerned. Her family was also much pleased with the change.

But, alas! "All that is bright must fade." The lady's resolve to share her husband's home faded away under the influence of a returning fit of *ennui*. She declared she could endure his presence no longer, and hastened away, lest *ennui* should give place to disgust. *Ennui* was an epidemic as prevalent then, it would seem, as vapours or nerves. The king was affected by it, and, more or less, society generally. The remedy, with the king, was alternate seclusion and the Rambouillet chase; with society, it was the *salon*, though not always an effective one.

The separate income of the marquise was hardly equal to the expense of setting up a *salon*—a *salon* that should compete with that of Madame de Tencin or of Madame de Lambert—who, in spite of her eighty-two years, still received weekly, and gave her famous Thursday dinners.

Literature and philosophy scarcely cared to show themselves where there was no prospect of dinner or supper. But where the good

things of life were liberally provided, it mattered not at all to which section of society the lady who did the honours belonged. What suppers and dinners were given by the popular singers and actresses! Mdlle. Le Couvreur, for instance; the singers Mdlle. Lemaure and Madame Pellissier—between whom great rivalry existed, the *beau monde* being undecided which lady to award the palm of *prima donna.* Again, Mdlle. Antier, who, as Ceres, had won, by the charm of her singing, the heart, as it was called, of the Vicomte Lamothe-Houdancourt, not only gave suppers herself, but, with her lover, was invited to those of ladies of high rank. Society, we learn, was greatly edified by the "*passion réciproque*" of this interesting couple. The enthusiasm of the gentleman, the smiling tenderness of the lady—"*Ah! c'etait vraimant charmant à voir.*" "Alas! the pity on't"—it did not last long.

If society smiled on this interesting pair of lovers, it looked severely on Madame du Deffant. The outraged feelings of the intimate friend she had forsaken for her husband, commanded, as naturally they would, general sympathy. Now, indeed, he had his revenge, and laughed as heartily at the marquis as at the friendless

marquise. It was then that the order to retire to her estates was received by Madame de Prie. The marquise, availing herself of this circumstance, thought it would be well, until society had had its laugh out, to go into exile also. *Ennuyée* in Paris, she yet failed to reflect what she would be at Courbe-Épine—her sole companion a disappointed, despondent *intrigante.* Naturally, she found life intolerable in that desolate Normandy château. Her fit of *ennui* was more real than any she had known before. She therefore determined to return; leaving her dear friend to loneliness, grief and despair, which, as we know, death by her own hand, soon after put an end to.

On returning to Paris, the marquise, to her surprise, received a visit from the Bishop of Clermont. Her relative, the Duchesse de Charost, believing that scepticism and irreligion, more than *ennui*, were the cause of her unsettled frame of mind and general discontent, fancied that Massillon might be able to reason her into a better state of feeling. Madame du Deffant, speaking of their interview, says, "My understanding was abashed before the greatness of his intellect; yet I submitted not to the force of his reasoning, but to the importance of the reasoner."

The *salon* of Madame de Tencin was at that time suffering a partial eclipse; it might have proved a total one, but for the money expended in bribes, and the influence of the archbishop, her brother. The numerous "*bêtes*" who composed her *ménagerie*, also exerted themselves to help her out of her trouble, being unwilling to lose their mistress and the good cheer with which she provided them. Yet her position, for awhile, was regarded as a perilous one.

M. La Fresnaye, Conseiller au Grand Conseil, after heavy losses at the gambling table, shot himself in the *boudoir* of Madame de Tencin. The ball passed through his heart, and he died on the instant. The President and Procureur were sent for, and the Conseiller was buried, at Madame de Tencin's request, secretly, and in the night. This strange story was told about Paris the next day, and with many particulars so unfavourable to the *Chanoinesse*, that she was arrested, and conveyed to the Châtelet, and thence to the Bastille. A paper was found in the desk of La Fresnaye, "to be opened only after his death, and in the presence of his creditors." Instead of an arrangement respecting his affairs, which it was supposed to

contain, it was a statement that he was ruined by the arts and deceptions of Madame de Tencin, and that if he died a violent death it was she who should be accused of it. She was one of those monsters, he said, who ought to be expelled the kingdom; being capable of the vilest deeds.

Much more followed, but the paper was condemned as malicious and untrue, and after two months' detention she was released from confinement, secure from any renewal of the accusations against her. Anxiety had told on her health. She was advised, therefore, on her liberation immediately to set out for her estates in Dauphiné, to recruit both health and spirits, before reappearing to shine once more as a bright particular star amongst her coterie of *beaux esprits* and *bêtes philosophes*.

La belle marquise, meanwhile, established herself in more unpretending style than, formerly, in her hôtel in the rue Ste. Anne. She gave her circle of learned wits and celebrities "*thé à l'Anglaise.*" Her suppers or dinners were never far-famed, but she was recognized as "*un monstre d'esprit,*" whose sentiments favoured the advance of the "*grande cause.*" Montesquieu, when in Paris during the vacation of the parlia-

ment of Bordeaux, of which he was president, was one of the most constant frequenters of her *salon*. The first success of his "Esprit des Lois" was due to her exertions in distributing copies, and to her professed admiration of the work as a most *spirituel* and remarkable production of a man of genius. Such, indeed, was the usual mode of launching a book. The Parisian booksellers' trade was not then a flourishing one, so difficult was it to obtain permission to publish "Avec privilege du roi."

The books most in request were not those openly exposed for sale on the steps of the Sainte Chapelle, but those which glided furtively into France from the presses of Amsterdam or Brussels. Voltaire was refused permission to print his "Henriade." He had desired to dedicate it to the king, and it was presented by Richelieu. Fleury declined to receive it; yet it was not condemned. A few copies, however, printed elsewhere, were distributed in Paris amongst private friends. This coming to the knowledge of some of the clergy, application was made for authority to seize them, with a view of suppressing the work entirely by means of ecclesiastical censure. It was then entitled "Le Poème de la Ligue," and was said to con-

tain passages favouring the errors of the "semi-Pelagians." But it was its advocacy of toleration, and especially the appreciative lines on Coligny,* that offended the clergy; in whom, with some honourable exceptions, a persecuting spirit seemed to be thought an atonement for their generally dissolute lives.

The "Henriade" was published by subscription in London, and dedicated to the Queen. Voltaire's friend, Thiriot, received subscriptions for the work in Paris, and payment for between twenty and thirty copies having been made, he put the amount aside for transmission to England. Some thief, however, entered his apartment while he was absent at high mass on Whit-Sunday morning, and stole the money. (The clergy should have caught this thief and have canonized him). The loss fell wholly on Voltaire; the copies subscribed for being delivered, though the subscription had van-

* To speak approvingly of Coligny, Du Plessis-Mornay, and other Protestant leaders, was, in the estimation of the court, to disseminate sedition; in that of the clergy, to propagate heresy. "Quels grands citoyens que Coligny, La Noue, Du Plessis-Mornay, D'Aubigné, même, *s'ils n'avaient pas été des sectaires!*" exclaims a recent bigoted French writer, in a sort of apology for the persecuting spirit of the sixteenth century.

ished. Yet the London edition of the "Henriade" was a most successful and profitable one.

Montesquieu visited England at about the same time as Voltaire. The latter had left France on being released from the Bastille, where he had been imprisoned for six months for sending a challenge to the Chevalier de Rohan. This magnificent personage, possessing no merit of his own, plumed himself greatly on his noble birth, and the merits of his ancestors. He disapproved, it appears, of the distinction with which Voltaire was received in the society of the *haute volée*. He took, therefore, the first opportunity that offered (it was at a réunion at the hôtel of the Duc de Richelieu) of showing his contempt for the plebeian poet, by addressing him in a manner his lackey would almost have resented. Voltaire replied in a politely veiled sarcasm which amused all present, except the Chevalier. He was highly incensed, but not being so *spirituel* as the poet he despised, the witty sally was received with disdainful silence. The noble Chevalier, however, revenged himself by ordering his servants, a day or two after, to insult Voltaire when leaving the hôtel of the Duc de Sully, with whom he had been dining.

The two lackeys thrust themselves against him, elbowed him roughly, and nearly threw him down stairs; at the same time greatly enjoying his discomfiture, and treating it as an excellent joke. The Duke, his host, expressed his regret, but took no further notice of the matter. The Chevalier was a scion of the great Rohan family. He bore on his shield, "*Rohan je suis.*" That repelled all who would dare to attack him. The tribunals, too, were not for such as he. No magistrate would presume to listen to an accusation against him, much less to punish so high and mighty a delinquent. But Voltaire, stung to the quick by the unprovoked insult he had received, after taking some lessons in the use of the sword, challenged the Chevalier. The reply was a *lettre-de-cachet*, and an apartment in the Bastille.

The Duc de Richelieu, some few months after, was about to leave Paris in very grand state, as Ambassador Extraordinary to the Court of Vienna. He and Voltaire were on intimate terms; and as the duke was at that time in favour at Versailles, and had obtained in his appointment to this embassy the wish of his heart, and facility for equipping himself with due splendour—by means of *un arrêt de*

surséance to shield him from his creditors, he resolved, before leaving, to do his poet friend a good turn, if possible, by securing his speedy release. He spoke to the king; also to the queen, who had but recently granted a pension of fifteen hundred francs to Voltaire from her own private purse. They referred him to Fleury, who, the affair being explained to him, granted the duke's request immediately.

Naturally Voltaire's six months' incarceration had given added keenness to his cynicism, rather than blunted its sting. His admiration of French institutions had at the same time diminished. He determined therefore to bid adieu for a time to his friends of the *salons*, to the budding philosophers, and to the many fair dames he adored. To none did he pay greater homage than to Madame du Deffant. The reign of the "sublime Emilie" had not then begun, and the *esprit fort* of the marquise commanded his highest admiration. He took every opportunity of speaking of her, of vaunting her understanding, of flattering her imagination, and of placing her on the very best terms with herself—though her excessive egoism had already rendered any efforts of that sort superfluous. He praised her wit, and

exaggerated excessively the merits of those bagatelles, *vers de société*, of which so plentiful a crop was then produced—not only in the *salon* of the marquise, but in every other *salon* of that day.

Of the poetic trifles of Madame du Deffant, Voltaire wrote :—

> " De qui sont ils ces vers heureux,
> Légers, faciles, gracieux ?
> Ils ont, comme vous, l'art de plaire ;
> Du Deffant, vous êtes la mère
> De ces enfants ingénieux."

But Voltaire did not linger long in Paris. Having bent the knee before the *spirituelle* marquise and the fair Adrienne Le Couvreur, and embraced those friends he called his "*chers anges*"—the d'Argental family—he left *la belle* France, crossed the Channel, and for the next three years took up his abode in England.

CHAPTER XIX.

Prayers for a Dauphin.—The Prayer is granted.—Louis XV. a Model Husband.—Baron's Final Retirement.—Death of Adrienne Le Couvreur.—Jealous Rivals.—Generosity of Adrienne.—Burial of Mdlle. Le Couvreur.—Voltaire's Lines on Adrienne.—Zaïre, ou Les Enfants Trouvés.—Grandval the Actor.—The Prime Donne—Rameau.—The Abbé Pelligem.—A Musical Cabal.—Voltaire et les Danseuses.—The Apotheosis of Hercules.—Boucher's Painting Room.

REAT was the disappointment of the French people when, in August, 1727, it was announced that twin daughters were born at Versailles—*Madame première, et Madame deuxième.* Greater still was the outcry in the following year, when *Madame troisième* made her appearance. The queen grieved and wept. She felt that she had not done her duty to the nation. But the king consoled her, and received the third little princess, we are told, "*tres galamment, et avec courage*"; yet he, too, would have given a much warmer welcome to a son.

However, it was thought advisable to petition heaven for a dauphin; and, accordingly, the Archbishop of Paris ordered public prayer to be made throughout the kingdom for an heir to the throne. The king and queen also went in state to Paris to ask the intercession of Ste. Geneviève. Marie Leczinska had been three years married, but this was her first visit to the capital. The Parisian world was therefore anxious to see its queen, and though not too well satisfied with her, gave her a cordial reception that proved cheering to her spirits. Barbier describes her as *petite*, slight in figure, and rather thin. Other accounts speak of her as above the middle height, and of graceful and dignified carriage; while one of her ladies of the palace says, rather contemptuously, "*C'est une assez bonne pâte de Polonaise; mais un peu bourgeoise, et très dévote.*" All, however, are agreed that she had no claim to beauty, though her face was not unpleasing, owing to its amiable and gentle expression.

She wore, we learn, on this occasion, a pale pink robe of state, with scalloped trimmings, but without ornament of gold or silver. The "Sancy" glittered in her hair; the twelve Mazarin diamonds, on her arm, set as a bracelet,

and, besides, the whole of the crown jewels apparently—with the exception of the "Regent," which the king wore in his hat—were arranged as stomacher, necklace, or other ornament for her dress or hair.

Thus brilliantly arrayed, and accompanied by the ladies and gentlemen of their household in full court dress and in the royal state carriages, their majesties traversed Paris. The glittering show delighted the people, who rarely witnessed the pomp and display of the court—royal visits to Paris being few and far between. Ste. Geneviève would seem to have lent a favourable ear to the prayers of the royal suppliants and their faithful lieges; for on the 4th of September—their majesties' wedding day—1729, the nation was gladdened by the news of the birth of a dauphin.

Few public rejoicings, however, took place. The king gave no signal, and the nation was as indolent and inert on the subject as their sovereign himself. It was desirable that there should be an heir to the throne. He was born. King and people were satisfied; there was an end of it; and the cardinal was far too anxious to restore order in the financial system to countenance, much less to propose, expenditure on

fêtes. Unlike Louis XIV. in his youth, Louis XV. shunned gaiety, and communicated his own gloomy apathy to the court. Nothing annoyed or bored him so much as having to take any part in a public ceremony or *fête.* He would scarcely look at a lady, and at that time was quite a model husband. "*La reine,*" he said, "*était plus jolie que les plus belles dames de la cour.*" But his constancy to the wife who had been chosen for him was owing more to indifference than admiration. With idleness and quietude he was then perfectly content, and, had he not been interfered with by the more actively evil-minded young men of his court, he would have gone on to the end of his career, simply, *un roi fainéant,* instead of being that and much more.

But, while the news from Versailles was received with a languid satisfaction by the *beau monde* of Paris, another and widely different announcement excited very lively regret among the society of the capital. It was that of the final performances of Michel Baron, and his retirement from the stage.

Owing to the greater popularity of operatic performances, both at the Academy of Music and Opéra Comique, the Théâtre Français had

received but indifferent support until the reappearance of Baron. His and Mdlle. Le Couvreur's interpretation of the principal *rôles* in the plays of Corneille and Racine, and the tragedies of Voltaire and La-Motte, had revived the vogue of the Théâtre; which was now a well-frequented and flourishing establishment. As Baron still trod the stage with a firm, elastic step, his form erect, his bearing noble, the fire of his eye undimmed, and his finely-modulated voice yet sonorous, flexible, and unfaltering, his intention to retire caused as much surprise as when, ten years before, his reappearance was announced.

Strength of will, a resolve not to succumb to the infirmities of age, bore him up through his part—"and," says an eye-witness, "it was difficult not to yield to the illusion that he was actually the person he represented." But, the play ended, it was evident that, if he had succeeded for awhile in overcoming physical weakness, he had suffered much in the struggle. He accepted, therefore, the warnings of nature, and retired with his great reputation undiminished. His acting gave a temporary revival of public favour even to the plays of Pradon. In "Regulus," a very poor tragedy, he made a

deep impression on his audience. One of his last appearances was as Ladislaus, in Rotrou's play of "Vencislaus." Though unaccustomed to betray any emotion, save that which the character he represented required, on that occasion, he is said to have hesitated for a moment, as if to overcome personal feeling—after repeating the words; "*Si proche du cercueil, où je me vois descendre.*"

The farewell to Baron was an ovation on the part of the public. He died in the following year; supposed to be not less than seventy-seven or eight. Under his portrait J. B. Rousseau wrote:—

> "Du vrai, du pathétique, il a fixé le ton,
> De son art enchanteur l'illusion divine
> Prêtait un nouveau lustre aux beautés de Racine
> Un voile aux défauts de Pradon."

In the same year that the death of Baron occurred, the Comédie Française lost another of its popular favourites—Adrienne Le Couvreur. It was then customary to attribute all deaths of which the exact cause was not known, to poison. The jealousy of the Duchesse de Bouillon was said to have occasioned Adrienne's, by means of poisoned pastiles, administered to her by a young abbé. It is a story unworthy of credit;

though probably Scribe's play may have contributed to gain credence for it. The Comte Maurice de Saxe was the fickle lover of both those ladies. But it does not appear that the duchess—who, like the actress, had a large circle of *amis intimes*—was so jealous of wholly monopolizing the attentions of that butterfly personage as to poison a former mistress: or, that the actress was so piqued by their transfer to another, that, forgetting what was due to the audience, she addressed, from the stage, the pointed speeches of Phédre—a part she was playing—to the duchess in her box, and was rewarded for this impertinence and bad taste by the plaudits of the whole house. Mdlle. Sauvré, on some other occasion, is said to have addressed a favoured rival from the stage; but the fickle lover was not Maurice de Saxe, and the audience was the reverse of sympathetic.

Voltaire, one of the most enthusiastic of Mdlle. Le Couvreur's host of admirers, repudiated the idea of poison, and attributed her death to a violent attack of dysentery. She took no care of her health, was near forty years of age, and had led a life in accordance with the licentiousness of the period; which was not only

little severe towards an actress, necessarily exposed to very great temptations; but could also regard with complacency the open depravity of such *grandes dames* as the Duchesse de Boufflers, granddaughter of the Maréchal de Villeroi. Voltaire himself introduced to Adrienne a friend who became a rival—his *cher ange*, the Comte d'Argental—who would have married *la belle actrice;* but she declined his suit, to the great relief of his family.

She doubtless felt more than a passing regard for the faithless Maurice de Saxe. To enable him to equip his soldiers when he proposed to recover the principality of Courland—to the sovereignty of which he had been elected, but was excluded from by Russia,—Adrienne, who was generous to prodigality, supplied him with the sum of forty thousand francs, the product of the sale of her jewels. Very sincere, too, was her regret when, not long before her death, she heard that he had gone to a ruinous expense and incurred debts in the construction of a "*galère*," which, propelled by mechanism, and probably steam, was to make the voyage up the Seine, from Rouen to Paris, in twenty-four hours. He had obtained, on the certificates of two men of

science, testifying to the utility of this project, a privilege or patent from the king. But in spite of the efforts of the best scientific skill and labour then obtainable, he never succeeded in getting the apparatus into working order. "*Mais, que diable allait-il-faire dans cette galère?*" exclaimed Adrienne when she heard of his scheme and its failure.

Priestly aid was not sought for Mdlle. Le Couvreur until it was too late to confess; to declare that she renounced her profession, and to receive absolution. Christian burial was therefore refused, though the large sum of a hundred thousand francs, which she charitably left to the poor, was not rejected by the Church; as consistently it should have been, as the gift of an *excommuniée*. Two street porters were employed to carry her body, in the night, to the corner of the Rue de Bourgogne, and to bury her there. Baron had dreaded a like indignity, but provided against it by timely arrangements with the Church. Yet he invariably asserted that he had never felt the smallest scruple to declaiming before the public the *chefs-d'œuvre* of the genius of the great French authors; and that nothing, he conceived, could be more irrelevant than to attach shame and disgrace

to the reciting of a work which it was deemed glorious to have composed.

"I have seen," says Collé, in his memoirs, "Baron, Le Couvreur, and Les Quinault; and they gave me the idea of perfection—and especially Baron; though, when I saw him, he could not have been less than seventy-three or seventy-five years of age."

Thus passed away, almost at the same time, these two great stars of the Théâtre Français. The indignant lines written by Voltaire on the ignominy cast on the great French actress by the countenance of the priesthood to such a burial as hers, were the cause of his again being obliged to leave Paris. He retired to Normandy where he wrote "Zaïre." The performance of the graceful Mdlle. Gaussin in the principal part quickly consoled him for the loss of Adrienne, who, as some persons thought, was excelled by her successor; art—as was the case with Baron—intelligently subdued, aiding and heightening the effect of her natural gifts. Of Adrienne, Voltaire wrote, "*La nature seule l'avait instruite, et Cupidon achevait l'enseignement.*" Voltaire's play of "Zaïre," achieved an immense success, and many were the heart-burnings it caused amongst would-be rivals.

To cast ridicule upon it in the *salons*, they gave it a new title, "La piêce des enfants trouvés." This raised many a laugh, but did not diminish the success of the play. Writing tragedies and comedies—which sometimes were read in the *salons*, but rarely produced on the stage—was as much a mania at that period, as the writing of novels in the present day.

After the retirement of Baron and the death of Mdlle. Le Couvreur, the popularity of the Comédie Française seems to have declined for awhile. Yet it maintained, undiminished, its reputation as the first theatre in Europe; the dramatic ability of the several members of its *troupe* forming, as was generally acknowledged, an assemblage of talent unrivalled elsewhere. Yearly, the old *répertoire* was gone through, Rotrou, Corneille, Molière, Racine, Pradon, and Crébillon's early tragedies. New productions were less generally approved by the constant *habitués* of the theatre. The success of a new play might be great, yet it would be allowed only a limited number of representations.

There were, it appears, fewer successful comedies than tragedies, yet Grandval, who contributed so much to make the fame of "Le Glorieux" was then in high repute both as an

actor and as "the glass of fashion." *Grands seigneurs* studied his looks, his gestures, his manner of carrying his cane, of presenting his snuff-box, of taking off his hat; his grandly deferential air when conversing with ladies; his entries and exits, and the graceful *tournure* of the whaleboned skirts of his coat. Happy, indeed, were many of the *jeunesse dorée* if, after diligent practice, they went forth from their *cabinets* Grandvals; but in their own opinion, Grandvals improved: so far surpassing their model, that they who studied most to catch the airs and graces of the actor, were fond of jesting in the *salons* on Grandval's amusing assumption of the manners of the *haute volée.*

But the most powerful counter-attraction to the Théâtre Français was at all times the opera. At this period disputes ran so high respecting the pre-eminence in talent and beauty of the three *prime donne*, that swords were drawn and blood was shed. Happily it flowed not from fatal wounds, but from slight scratches and gashes, which the ladies' admirers respectively felt compelled, in honour, to give and receive whenever a word in disparagement of the object of his adoration was uttered in his presence. It was often elegantly said of Mdlle. Lemaure,

that she was "*bête comme un pot.*" She had a fine voice, but no musical culture, and little natural intelligence. But she had a pretty face, and was always splendidly dressed.

They were advantages that counted for much, for musical taste was but little developed; Lulli most frequently occupied the scene, and the audience was familiar to weariness with the chief of his productions. Madame Pellissier was an *artiste* of greater pretensions, whose merits were recognized by the more critical part of her hearers. Little Mdlle. Antier was both clever and pretty, and sang, it was said, with the tenderness of the dove; which, reminding one of a monotonous cooing, does not seem very high praise. Of the male singers, Thévenard, Chassé, and Murane were most in favour. Murane was subject to frequent fits of religious melancholy, and inclined to migrate from the operatic stage to the cloister. It is probable that Francine, Lulli's son-in-law, who so long had the direction of the opera of the Academy, may have been the cause of Lulli's music being for so many years almost exclusively given there.

When Destouches, the musician, in 1724 succeeded Francine in the management

of the opera, he brought forward his own musical compositions, which were rather below than above mediocrity. Compra, a better musician but inferior composer, was not more successful. Yet the talented Rameau, whose musical gifts had been evident from childhood; who had studied his art in Italy, had published a treatise on harmony, studies in counterpoint, and other theoretical works, with some successful sonatas for the clavecin, on which he was a skilful performer, could scarcely obtain by teaching, in Paris, the bare means of subsistence.

He had sought the appointment of organist at one of the churches of Paris, but had failed to obtain it, owing to the opposition he had met with from the paltry intrigues of jealous mediocrity. Disgusted and disheartened, and suffering from distress, he was glad to accept the place of organist of the Cathedral of Clermont, in Auvergne; his hopes of rising to distinction in the musical world being thus long-deferred, and, at first, apparently at an end.

In 1723, Michel Montéclair, first contrebasse of the Orchestra of the Academy of Music, produced an opera, "Jephte," which the director accepted, and which was well received by the public. Rameau, who was present at its first

representation, was moved by the applause bestowed on it, to abandon his theoretical writings for the composition of operatic music. Yet there seems to have existed somewhere a persistent determination to thwart his hopes. To get a hearing, he wrote the music for Piron's piece, "La Rose," which was produced at the Théâtre de la Foire of St. Germain, the composer's name being withheld. It was, however, very successful, and the airs became popular.

The Abbé Pelligem, a writer of canticles—which it was his singular custom to adapt to airs of the Pont-Neuf, or tunes of the satirical, often ribald, songs of the people—had written a dramatic poem entitled "Hippolyte et Anne." Persuaded by Mdme. de la Poplinière,—wife of the wealthy fermier-général, and daughter of Daucour, of the Théâtre Français—who had been a pupil of Rameau, the Abbé entrusted his poem to the poor organist to set to music. This was quickly done, and the piece produced. A cabal, meanwhile, was got up. Enthusiastic Lullists were joined by some of the singers, and it was determined that Rameau's music should not be heard, but be put down at once.

The house was well filled; all, however, were not opponents. Those who went, intend-

ing to hear, appear to have been as numerous as those who had determined that nothing should be heard. Numerous interruptions occurred. A large number of the rioters were ejected, and notwithstanding the great disadvantages of so tumultuous a first representation, enough was heard by competent connoisseurs to convince them that France possessed a musician of genius. That, in fact, a greater than Lulli was there. Laborde, writing of him says, "*La musique doit à Rameau autant que la physique doit à Newton.*" But Rameau was fifty years of age before his talent obtained recognition, and even then it was but grudgingly granted—the Lullist and Ramist contest being kept up for some time. His opera of Castor and Pollux completed his triumph. The world then ran after him, lauded him as before it had dispraised him, and librettists innumerable besieged him with offers of collaboration.

Another great attraction at the opera was the *ballet*. Nicolet, and Mdlles. Sallé and Camargo were the principal dancers, and the corps-de-ballet, generally, was very efficient.

"Oh! Camargo, que vous êtes brilliante!
Mais, que Sallé est beaucoup plus ravissante,"

wrote Voltaire, uncertain to which of these divinities, "filles de Terpsichore et l'Amour," the greater homage was due.

There is a very graceful picture by Lancret, the pupil and imitator of Watteau, of Mdlle. Sallé as a wood nymph.

> "Ses pas sont mesurés par les grâces
> Et composés par les amours,"

again writes the enraptured Voltaire. But when Mdlle. Camargo, whose dancing is described as having the appearance of flying, once more, fluttering her gauzy wings, dazzles him by her rapid flight across the stage, he writes—

> "Camargo vole en ces beaux lieux
> On voit sans toi languir nos yeux,
> De tes pas la vivacité,
> Est l'image de la volupté ;
> Pour te suivre les jeux, les ris,
> Ont quitté la cour de Cypris."

The scenery, dresses, and decorations were splendid. The opera, indeed, never succeeded in paying its expenses, so costly were its scenic effects and general arrangements. The State had continually to release the directors from debt. Yet the opera was greatly patronized, and the salaries of the principal singers and

dancers were small, compared with those received by the great *artistes* of the present day. The great outlay was in stage decorations and dress.

The famous Boucher now painted the scenery. He was a pupil of Lemoine, the painter of the "Apotheosis of Hercules," on the ceiling of the grand salon of Versailles. The work occupied him four years, but, as he fancied that it did not meet with due appreciation from the king and the cardinal, the disappointment preyed on his mind, and in a moment of despair he committed suicide. Boucher did not equal his master, and was inferior to Watteau, whom he imitated. He had but lately returned from Italy, where he had joined Carle Vanloo. Italy, however, was not to his taste. He loved Paris and the libertine life he led there. He cared not for the old masters, and preferred to paint *figurantes* to saints. Yet, in purely decorative art, Boucher was unrivalled.

Soon after his return to France, he fell in love at first sight with a young girl, who, with her beauty and a large basket of cherries, made a very pretty picture, as she sat selling her fruit at the corner of a street in Paris. This young girl became his mistress, but soon after died,

when Boucher, to dispel his deep grief, plunged into a course of reckless dissipation. The grief was quickly dispelled, it appears, as he shortly after married, but the dissipation continued. In spite of his meretricious style, and the adverse criticism he met with, Boucher became the fashion, and painted fair dames of every degree, and every shade of philosophy. His painting room was a perfumed boudoir, draped with plaited pink silk and curtained and festooned with pale blue satin.

CHAPTER XX.

A Drawing-Room Picture.—The Young Comte de Mirabeau.—Rival Gambling Salons.—The Foundling, d'Alembert.—The Irrepressible Bull.—Mdlle. Daucour.—The Rich Fermier-Général.—The Hôtel La Poplinière.—A Scene of Enchantment.—A French Mephistophiles.—The Banished Wife.—The Infamous de Richelieu.

"WHAT a *tapage* at the Français last night!" murmurs a lady, as with an indolent air she reclines on the cushions of a crimson brocaded and gold-laced *canapé* in the *salon* of Mdme. de Tencin. She has scarcely the air of a Frenchwoman. Her eyes are large, dark, and lustrous. She wears no rouge, and the clear, pale *bistre* tint of he complexion, the strongly marked eyebrows, and masses of dark hair coiled round her head, *en diademe*, and guiltless of powder, seem to denote an Oriental origin. Her dress is of rich material, and, on the whole, is of the fashion of the

day. Yet it so far differs in many of its details from the prevailing taste, as to appear an adaptation of *la mode* to the style and fancy of the wearer, more than a full concession to fashion's decrees.

A little negro, fancifully attired, stands near the end of the *canapé*, fluttering a large bunch of marabout plumes. Most ladies at this period had an attendant negro boy, but rarely did he appear so harmonious an accessory as in the very pretty picture formed by this lady and her slave.

"And what was the cause of the *tapage*, *ma chère?*" inquires Madame de Tencin, as she glances at two young men in earnest conversation at the further end of the *salon*, and who both are her *protégés*—one, indeed, is her reputed son—they are the younger Helvetius and d'Alembert.

"All the news and *on-dits* of the day," she continues, "reach you, *ma belle Haidée*, sooner even than Madame du Deffant, though Pont de Veyle carries his daily budget to her. But then you see him first, and you have d'Argental's report besides."

"I heard this from the Chevalier," replies the lady. "He was at the Français when a

party of young officers entered and called loudly for one of Molière's plays, 'Le Tartuffe,' I think, instead of 'Britannicus,' the piece announced. To not a word of the latter would they listen; the actors were hissed whenever they attempted to speak. The disturbance at last became so general, that the police with difficulty ejected the rioters and some of the audience who had joined them. Foremost among them was the dissipated young Comte de Mirabeau,* who has fallen desperately in love with Mdlle. d'Angeville, and vows he will marry her in spite of his family."

"Young Mirabeau marry d'Angeville!" exclaimed Helvetius, advancing towards the ladies. "He could as easily persuade the old Marquis himself to consent, as prevail on her to do so. She read his tender *billets-doux* last night for the amusement of the company at supper at La Quinault's. Mirabeau will be on his way to Besançon to-morrow. Duras' regiment is there, and he joins it."

"Poor boy," sighs the lady on the sofa. "He is but seventeen."

Madame de Tencin replies not; her thoughts

* Father of the great orator.

have been turned to other objects. "They play at Cavagnole, and play high at La Quinault's?" she says inquiringly.

"Sometimes, Madame," replies Helvetius.

"You were there, then, last night?"

"Frankly, yes, Madame."

"And d'Alembert?"

"D'Alembert also." Helvetius answers for him, and a smile passes over the face of the young man. For nowhere is gambling more reckless, more ruinous, than in the *salon* of Madame de Tencin. Helvetius is wealthy; he is a *protégé* she is proud of. He is young, handsome, *spirituel;* professes atheism, and is approved by Voltaire. She feels that society is greatly indebted to her for discerning the merits of this brilliant young man, and producing him in the *salon* at so early an age. Yet his superfluous cash, she considers, should not be diverted from her tables to fill the purses of actresses.

As for d'Alembert, except for a certain interest she takes in him, it matters not at all. He has nothing to lose. His only assured income is a yearly allowance of twelve hundred francs from the Chevalier Destouches, his reputed father. D'Alembert, as an infant of a

few days old, was found, abandoned, on the steps of the church of St. Jean-Tourniquet, by a glazier, who took pity on the poor child and carried him home to his wife. These good people brought him up as their own son; his education being provided for by Madame de Tencin.

When she perceived that he gave promise of becoming distinguished among men of science and *gens de lettres*, she was desirous of acknowledging him. But d'Alembert declined the honour, saying, "The only mother he knew was the woman who had rescued and nursed him in infancy." On the other hand, it is asserted that he was so mortified at the generally supposed obscurity of his birth, that he would have been only too happy to have accepted the recognition of Madame de Tencin or Destouches, had they really offered it. However, he frequents her *salon*, and her patronage is useful to him. She has lost none of her *prestige* by the misadventure that caused her temporary eclipse. She has resumed her place, and shines as brilliantly as ever among the stars of the Parisian *beau monde*. Arrived, too, at that uncertain period of life called middle age, Madame de Tencin is even more distinguished

than before. Forbidden philosophical books are secretly circulated through her influence; young men are formed in manners, initiated in the principles of the new school of thought, and develop their talent for *esprit* in her *salon.*

Her brother, the archbishop, a firm partizan of the Bulle Unigenitus, is at this time engaged in persecuting the venerable old bishop of Sénez, who has opposed the Bull, and is suspected of Jansenism. Fleury, so fond of peace, is much disturbed by this resurrection of the irrepressible Bull, as well as by the scenes of daily occurrence in Paris in the cemetery of St. Médard. There, a fanatical Jansenist, known as the Diâcre-Pâris, has recently been buried, and miracles are said to take place at his tomb. The cemetery is thronged. The lame man carried there, at once casts aside all aid and returns home running and leaping. The blind see; the dumb speak; the deaf hear—so it is affirmed. The people, however, are more inclined to profane jesting than reverence, and the philosophers protest against such scenes, as the work of a knavish priesthood. The cemetery is to be closed, and Tencin, to whom such work is a labour of love, relieves the aged Fleury from much trouble and anxiety by

his success in putting down the scandals of Jansenism, and compelling acceptance of the Bull.

Madame de Tencin has, therefore, some influence with the cardinal-minister, and, having become devout, has exerted it on the side of morality. It was she who induced the cardinal to refuse the wealthy La Poplinière the renewal of his term of fermier-général, unless he made his mistress his wife. He had long promised to do so; but Mdlle. Daucour, the lady in question, complained of the delay in the performance of his promise. Madame de Tencin was her friend. Into her sympathetic ear she poured the story of her wrongs. Virtuously indignant, she undertook Mdlle. Daucour's cause, requesting only secrecy on her part. A word to the cardinal, and a hint from the king—who desired that his court and his people should follow his example of conjugal fidelity—very soon after made Mdlle. Daucour Madame de La Poplinière.

M. de La Poplinière was not perhaps the richest of the financiers of Paris. The famous Samuel Bernard was no doubt a much richer man, and the extreme benevolence of his character led him to make a far nobler use of his

wealth than M. de La Poplinière did of his. The latter was chiefly known for his magnificent style of living. His hôtel in the Rue St. Antoine was furnished with a splendour that vied with that of the Hôtel Lesdiguières.

His "*petite maison*" at Auteuil, on a smaller scale, was a sort of palace of the genii. Boucher was called from his silk-draped *boudoir* to paint on the panels of the *salons* some of those exquisite designs in which he so greatly excelled. There were fine specimens of Natoire's far-famed decorative work, and portraits of *belles dames de l'opéra* by Carle Vanloo and Largillière, *fils* (who was called the Vandyke of France, and who continued to paint portraits with undiminished skill until near the age of ninety). M. de La Poplinière was not only a liberal patron of the arts, but a giver of sumptuous banquets. His hôtel was the general resort of the *beaux esprits*, *bons vivants*, philosophers, stars of the theatrical and musical world, painters of celebrity, and a fair sprinkling of the *noblesse.*

Naturally, the incense of flattery was unsparingly bestowed on him. It is therefore not surprising to find him a little vain of his social achievements. But he was a remarkably genial

host, rather distinguished in appearance, and having married Mdlle. Daucour, he presented her to his friends with some pride. For she was a young and charming woman, very musical, witty, and agreeable, and, as he conceived, did honour to his choice. Foreigners of distinction often visited M. de La Poplinière. A portion of his hôtel was set apart for the reception of the *virtuosi* of other nations, who, when sojourning in Paris for awhile, accepted, as his guests, the hospitality of his princely establishment. Italian painters, sculptors, and musicians were sure of a gracious welcome, both from Monsieur and Madame.

Rameau, patronized by Madame de La Poplinière, had an apartment assigned him, with the appointment of organist; a chapel, also a small theatre, being attached to the hôtel. In the *bijou salle de spectacle*, Rameau officiated as *chef d'orchestre*. On Sundays, at Mass, he improvized on the organ. The mingled sweetness and sadness of his strains; his "*sensibilité religieuse*," as Diderot, then young, was accustomed to say, greatly impressed his hearers; and none more than Diderot himself—the most highly gifted of the philosophic band, though, unhappily, of so ill-organized a mind.

The *petits-soupers* at Auteuil outrivalled all others. Not merely in the repast itself; in the magnificent silver table service, of artistic design and exquisite workmanship; but in the general arrangements. Guests, taken there for the first time, are said to have been as startlingly surprised as though some brilliantly lighted scene of enchantment had suddenly opened before them. Perfumes, flowers, scenic illusions, music, instrumental and vocal, by unseen performers, a perfect intoxication of the senses. No wonder that Mdlle. Daucour should have desired permanently to dwell in this fairy bower; that she should have been grateful to her dear Madame de Tencin for the word in season dropped into the ear of the good cardinal, always so anxious to help society to reform.

She was a much envied woman in the *beau monde* of Paris, in spite of a singularly laughable crotchet of M. de La Poplinière, who, while adopting in other respects the manners and customs of the *haute volée*, was actually so barbaric in his ideas, that he refused to allow his wife the services of an *ami intime*. He chose to take the duties of that office on himself, and was so boyishly romantic as to allow

it to appear that he had an affectionate regard for his wife. Some sharp-sighted ladies kept a vigilant eye on her; just to see how she bore such tyranny. But all went on well, until "this long dream of happiness," as it was jestingly termed, was one evening the subject of conversation and laughter in a *salon* where a number of ladies were amusing themselves with their "purfling," and gentlemen with their embroidery. One of them was that Mephistophiles of French society, of whom it was said, "*qu'il avait résolu de s'emparer du monde, comme le serpent l'avait fait, par la femme*"—the infamous Duc de Richélieu.

Hitherto he had honoured La Poplinière with but little of his company. The réunions of *artistes* possessed small attraction for him, and the host, to his mind, was far too pretentious—putting himself on a level with *grands seigneurs* such as he; though Richélieu, in fact, had but little to plume himself upon in his ancestry. However, he has now a worthy motive for renewing his acquaintance with the magnificent financier, to whom anonymous notes are soon after constantly addressed, attributing disparaging conduct to his wife. He has confidence in her and disregards such insinuations.

But during her absence at a *fête*, a more explicit letter reaches him. He is induced to push his enquiries further, and to his intense dismay, he is compelled to give credence to the accusations against her. He orders that the doors be closed, and admission refused on her return. News of what has occurred is carried to her. Meeting with her husband's friend, the Maréchal de Saxe, she prays him to take her home in his carriage. He does so, and thrusting aside the servant, who would prevent her from entering, he leads her to her husband. "Listen," he says, "for a moment to your wife, she desires to justify herself in your eyes." He then leaves them together.

La Poplinière is in a distracted state of mind; he turns sadly from his wife, when, throwing herself on her knees, she implores forgiveness for the wrong she has done him. Her confession increases both his anger and his grief. He desires her to leave his house, and she does so on the following day, to take up her abode in a humble cottage at Passy, with a small monthly allowance for her support from her husband. There she pines away; grief, remorse, despair, soon do their work, and La Poplinière is released from the fair frail wife who had so

bitterly deceived him, but whom, nevertheless, he unceasingly regrets. As, at the marriage of Mdlle. de Valois, Richelieu presented himself to gaze unmoved on the grief of the young girl whose love he had won, and who was sacrificing herself for him, so this insidious seducer had the audacity and barbarity similarly to insult the erring wife who so weakly yielding to his blandishments, had brought ruin and disgrace on her head.

Richelieu had then just married his second wife, Mdlle. de Guise, the heiress of the Duc de Lorraine. But he confessed that what pleased him most in this marriage was the right it gave him to add the cross of Lorraine and the golden eaglets of a sovereign house to his family arms. He therefore was not restrained by any feeling for his bride, from gratifying his desire to ascertain how the financier's wife was affected by the sudden transition from affluence and happiness to straitened means, neglect and contempt.

CHAPTER XXI.

Thé à l' Anglaise and a Lecture.—The Queen's Privy Purse.—The President Hénault.—Le Marquis d'Argenson.—Defence of the Cardinal.—The Cardinal's Petit Coucher.—Mademoiselle Aïssé.—The Chevalier d'Aydie.—The Sleep of Death.—History of the Fair Haidée.—Les Devotionnettes.—A Warning Sign from on High.—Miss Black.

A LETTER, informing Madame de Tencin of the death of her friend and *protégée*, Madame de la Poplinière, was put into her hands when her thoughts were occupied, as we have noticed, with the rival gambling tables of the *salon* Quinault. It afforded her a ready theme for moralizing, as well on the sad event itself, as generally, on the manners of the age. Having left off rouge, she could, of course, with much propriety, be severe on that subject. And she was severe, for the especial benefit of the two youths, Helvetius and d'Alembert, respecting whose success in society—not the society of actresses, as she remarked—she might naturally be sup-

posed to feel anxious, as they had made their *début* under her auspices and in her *salon.*

With well simulated reverence they listened to the preaching of the reformed sinner (for such in some sense she was), while sipping their tea, ordered in as a support to her lecture. *Thé à l'Anglaise,* in the more severe *salons,* such as that of Madame de Tencin, was preferred as an accompaniment to conversation, and "a something to do," to purfling *découpure,* or cutting out pictures, and the working of worsted roses.

The tea table is placed in front of the sofa, where the Circassian lady reclines, though not so much from indolence as because she is ill. Her malady is consumption, a very prevalent one at the period in question. It is a fitful, deceptive disease. She fancies to-day that she really has nothing but a slight feeling of languor to overcome, and she will be perfectly well. Hence, her visit to Madame de Tencin, who, after being her inveterate enemy, is become her very dear friend, but may be her enemy again. It is the way, you know, of womankind to be thus capricious in their so-called friendships. But let us not moralize: it is "flat, stale, and unprofitable" so to do.

The warnings and teachings of the usually *spirituelle* Madame de Tencin had reached the very verge of drowsiness, when two *habitués* of her *salon* fortunately dropped in and turned the sluggish current of conversation into another channel. One of the arrivals was the president, Hénault, controller of the queen's household, and keeper of her privy purse—the last an office of no great responsibility, for the cardinal allowed but little to be put into the purse. Its disbursements were, therefore, scarcely more important than the distributing of *liards* to the poor. The queen had, indeed, complained to the king of the cardinal's stinginess; he, however, only recommended her to follow his example, and ask him for nothing; when she would be sure of meeting with no refusal.

But Hénault has a literary reputation, and it is founded on his chronological histories of France, Spain, and Portugal. His suppers have made him famous in social circles, and his *esprit* has gained him brevet rank in the *salon* of the vivacious Duchesse du Maine. There are people who consider Hénault as, before all things, *un bon vivant.* But his *gourmandise*, we learn, was the "*gourmandise des gens d'esprit*"—an enlightened appreciation of the *nuances* of

flavour in savoury dishes, and the delicate *bouquet* of choice wines. Madame du Deffant said of the president (he was president of the parliament of Paris), that "supper was one of the essential qualities of the man. Take that away, what remains to him?" she asked. Voltaire judged differently, and often addressed flattering lines to his friend, whose talent he could appreciate as well as his suppers :—

Hénault, fameux par vos soupers
Et par votre chronologie,
Par des vers au bon coin frappés
Pleins de douceurs et d'harmonie.

Les femmes vous ont pris fort souvent
Pour un ignorant fort aimable ;
Les gens en *us*, pour un savant,
Et le Dieu joufflu de la table
Pour un connaisseur fort gourmand."

Hénault has but just left Madame du Deffant, more than usually oppressed by the demon *ennui*. He has confided her to the tender care of another devoted friend, the Marquis de Pont de Veyle. Often the Marquis spends the live-long day seated at one corner of her fire-place, the Marquise occupying the opposite side—he, gazing upon her, as though enjoying the spectacle of a martyr to *ennui*, she, affecting not to be aware of his presence.

The other addition to Madame de Tencin's tea-table guests is the Marquis d'Argenson, a severe censurer of the manners and morals of the period.

He complains of the *mauvais ton* that now prevails in circles that once were called *la bonne société*. Conversation, he says, is a thing of the past. Philosophy, intent only on breaking down the barriers that should separate classes, fills every *salon* with a heterogeneous mob, amongst whom he finds himself a stranger, and far more solitary than when alone in his study with no society but that of his books. "If," he continues, "any subject of interest should perchance be introduced in these *salons*, immediately the frivolous company begin to laugh, to yawn, to talk all at once, to ask questions the most irrelevant; being too idle to listen, too ignorant to reason. He can compare them only to a number of birds twittering in a bush, and all piping at random, each one striving only to be loudest."

The *salon* in which he has for years been accustomed to lament over the *décadence* of good manners, no longer exists. Madame de Lambert has passed away, at the age of eighty-six. "In her circle courtesy was a sentiment of

the mind, and humanity dwelt in the heart. The politeness which has taken the place of courtesy, consists of an infinity of words without meaning; while humanity, having left the heart for the lips, has no longer any base of esteem or affection."

The Marquis is an admirer of the Cardinal-minister. "They who would like to see him superseded," he says, "deny him the genius of a statesman, and condemn his policy as wanting in breadth and boldness. Yet," urges the Marquis, in the warmth of his attachment to the old cardinal, "he has given proof of the possession of the ministerial qualities of justness and solidity in his views and intentions, and of frankness and good faith in his dealings with foreigners. His policy is sufficiently adroit without being treacherous; he is clear-sighted enough to discern the snares and traps laid for him by courtiers who would displace him, and he cleverly avoids them, or, at times, turns them to account, without resorting to perfidious means or adopting Machiavellian measures."

Replying to the questioning of the ladies, d'Argenson informs them that he was present on the previous evening at that most ridiculous yet amusing spectacle, called by the people, "*le*

petit coucher of the Cardinal-king." What precedent the cardinal could produce for assuming such a prerogative to belong to the post he fills, the Marquis declares he knows not. For Fleury accepts no title but that of Minister of State, though it is certain that the whole power of the State is in his hands—far more so, and more uncontestedly, than it was ever possessed by Richelieu by means of his numerous executions, or by Mazarin with all his intrigues.

Every evening the whole of the court, with gentlemen, tradespeople, the idle and the busy, are waiting at the doors of the cardinal's apartment. When his eminence has passed into his dressing-room, the doors are opened, the people enter and assist at the cardinal's preparations for bed. They see him divest himself of his clothing, put on his night-shirt, and comb his flowing white locks, which time has now very much thinned. During this operation he speaks of the chit-chat and news of the day, interspersed with many a jest and *bon-mot*, sometimes good, sometimes bad, but all of which are laughed at and applauded by his auditors. Some remonstrances on this practice of joking in public were addressed to him by the Abbé de Pomprona, who has much influence with the old cardinal, and

wished to convince him, without actually saying so, that his joking was rather undignified. He told him an epigram or two, then current, respecting the *petit coucher* itself. But Fleury has not seen fit to make any change—believing the people to be anxious to see him, and having, as he said, no other spare time in which to gratify them without intruding on the hours devoted to business of State.

As the Marquis ceases speaking, Mdlle. Aïssé, or the fair Haidée, as she is sometimes called, rises from the *canapé*. The fair, pale face is suddenly suffused with a roseate glow; the large soft eyes light up with pleasure. How graceful, how elegant her figure! By the beauty that remains, one perceives how beautiful she must have been in the first blush of youth, when her charms were the theme of general admiration, and she was celebrated as

"Aïssé qui de la Grèce épuisa la beauté."

She is now thirty-eight or thirty-nine years of age; *une poitrinaire*, fading away daily, though she cannot realize what is clearly apparent to all but herself. The change from languor to animation has been caused by the entrance of the Chevalier d'Aydie, a relative of the

Marquis de Saint-Aulaire, and a knight of St. John of Jerusalem. It is the dream of Haidée that this lover of hers does not marry her, because she will not consent to an alliance which she believes prejudicial to his interests. Her own fortune is small, and he has scarcely at command the means and influence to purchase a dispensation from his vow of celibacy, even if he desired it. But he is rather the adored than the adorer. He submits to be loved, and the love lavished upon him is so strong, so true, that he must be marble-hearted indeed did he not respond to it with, at least, a tender pity akin to love.

But Mdlle. Aïssé's chair is waiting. The Chevalier will probably escort her home. Madame de Tencin and her guests compliment and congratulate the *belle Circassienne* on her apparently improved health. She looks bright and happy as she leaves the *salon*, leaning on her Chevalier's arm. But she has exerted herself unusually to-day, and feels much fatigued on arriving at her home; so much so that, reclining on a sofa, she sinks almost immediately into a deep slumber. It has continued an hour or more, yet still she sleeps; she stirs not.

The Chevalier waits to say farewell. He

is a great lover of the chase, and is about to leave Paris for awhile, to hunt the wild boar and the wolf on his estate in the forest of Poitou. He approaches the sofa. He is struck by the ashy paleness of the sleeper; then raises the arm that hangs listlessly by her side. Ah! how cold! how nerveless. All know that touch, and what a thrill it sends through the frame—the Chevalier's lady-love sleeps the sleep of death!

Many had been the guesses and speculations in years gone by, as to the real origin of Mdlle. Aïssé; but latterly, except in the immediate circle in which she was brought up, the gay world had almost forgotten her. She had withdrawn from it, and the charm of more youthful beauties now formed the subject of the flattering effusions of drawing-room poets. She first came to France at about the age of four years with the Comte de Ferriol, French Ambassador at the court of the Sultan. He had bought her for three hundred piasters in the slave-market at Constantinople, having when casually passing through it, been struck by her childish grace, her beauty and her tears. He named her Haidée, and placed her, on his return, with his brother's wife, Madame de Ferriol, to be carefully educated during his further absence in Turkey. Not-

withstanding this story, it was generally believed that the little girl was the Count's own daughter, and her mother the very handsome Turkish woman who came to France with them, and resided in his house while he remained in Paris.

It was, however, given out that Haidée was actually a Circassian princess, captured with other children and women, by a party of Turks on a marauding expedition into the territory of the prince, her father. Indistinct memories were said to float in her mind of the splendours of the palace that was her early home, and were received as confirmatory of M. de Ferriol's account of his *protegée*. The Count provided liberally for her. She was reared in luxury, and dressed at all times as befitted the rank of a princess, and her superb Oriental beauty.

The hôtel Ferriol was the resort of the *beaux esprits* of the dissolute society of the regency. Madame de Ferriol, like her sister, Madame de Tencin, was a frequenter of the Palais Royal, and was the friend of Madame de Parabère and the regent's mistresses generally. In this corrupt society the youthful Haidée grew to womanhood. She says of herself, "*J'ai été le jouet des passions.*" But by-and-by, Madame de Ferriol and her sister became what the old cardinal, with a

slightly sarcastic smile, used to call "*dévotionnettes.*" They left off rouge, went daily to mass and confessed. Then arose Madame de Ferriol's anxiety for the conversion of her brother's *protegée.* But already she was half converted. She had fallen in love with the Chevalier, and desired to reform, fearing that she was unworthy of his love. "*Ma mauvaise conduite m'a rendue misérable,*" she exclaims.

Henceforth the Chevalier is all the world to her. Yet still she continues to appear at the theatre with Madame de Parabère, rather *naïvely* expressing a hope that it may be charitably supposed she is not acquainted with the secrets of her dissolute life. Voltaire addressed many of his adulatory *vers de salon* to Mdlle. Aïssé, and sometimes corresponded with her. The sons of Madame de Ferriol, the Marquis de Pont de Veyle and le Comte d'Argental, were his *chers anges.* Naturally, then, she had her full share of the poetic incense he distributed so lavishly.

When the Comte de Ferriol died, he left his adopted daughter a legacy of fifty thousand francs, and an annuity of four thousand.

It would seem that the Duc d'Orleans, son of the regent, had seen and admired Mdlle.

Aïssé at the Palais Royal réunions. Having become a widower two years after his marriage with the Princess of Baden, and hearing that Mdlle. Aïssé had left off rouge and was now a strict devotee, he determined, after due consideration, to ask her to be his wife—*à la main gauche,* perchance; or he may have thought that, as a Circassian princess, she was eligible as regarded royal birth; for his ideas concerning the affairs of every-day life were no less singular than his religious views. On arriving at her residence on his matrimonial errand, the lady was not at the moment able to receive him. While waiting for her appearance, it happened that the fastenings of some portion of his clothing gave way. He was much struck by so remarkable a circumstance; and, with devout resignation, received it as a warning sign from on high that the marriage he contemplated was not one of those made in heaven, therefore, not approved there.

Congratulating himself on being spared from having run counter to the wishes of providence, he addressed a few crazy compliments to the lady and took his leave, without uttering a word on the subject to which she owed his visit. He was known to be not quite *compos*

mentis, so that his eccentricities rarely excited surprise. He believed neither in births nor deaths. When told of the death of Mdlle. Aïssé, he was exceedingly angry, said it was impossible; the king had concealed her to keep her out of his sight.

A daughter, born in England, when Mdlle. Aïssé was on a visit to the Countess of Bolingbroke, was christened Célanie, and afterwards brought up in France at the Convent of Sens, under the name of Miss Black. In those very unpleasing letters to Madame Calendrini, consisting chiefly of idle gossip concerning the depraved society of her day, Mdlle Aïssé's visits to this daughter are sometimes referred to. In 1740, the Chevalier acknowledged Miss Black, and she left her convent to marry the Vicomte de Nanthia—un gentilhomme de Périgord.

Voltaire, writing to his *cher ange* d'Argental, in 1761, mentions the death of the Chevalier d'Aydie, and the end of this little romance. On the history or legend of this supposed Circassian princess, the opera of Haidée is thought to have been founded.

CHAPTER XXII.

Conspiracy of the Marmosets.—The Duc de Gêvres.—The Ducal Gambling-House.—An Interesting Invalid.—Court Secrets.—Tapestry-Working Statesmen.—The Queen grows Jealous.—The Coiffure of Madame de Gontaut.—Madame de Mailly.—The King accepts a Mistress.—The Petits-Soupers at Choisy.—Stanislaus Leczinski.—The Brave Bréhant de Plélo.—The Court of Lorraine.—Death of Madame de Vintimille.

VERY smoothly, very pleasantly, would have glided on the life of the aged Cardinal-minister, but that, from time to time, theological quarrels were forced on his attention by the unquiet and domineering spirit of a portion of the clergy. Still, he kept on the even tenor of his way, on the whole, but slightly disturbed by them. If his ministerial course did not always prove a pathway of roses, the thorns that had hitherto beset it, were few.

When Mazarin died, the *chansonniers* wrote what they called his epitaph :—

"Ci gît l'Eminence deuxième,
Dieu nous garde d'un troisième."

But the mild sway of "*Son Eminence troisième*," and his economical administration of the finances, already gave more than a promise to France of returning national prosperity. The daily prayer of the people—as the best blessing that heaven could bestow on them—was that the old cardinal's life might be prolonged, and his bodily health and mental vigour continue unimpaired. Clouds, however, were beginning to obscure the political horizon. There were rumours of war, and signs of domestic annoyances. Of the latter was the intrigue named the "Conspiracy of the Marmosets."

The Ducs de Gêvres and d'Epernon, with M. de Coigny, *pages de cour*, weary of the monotony of the court, and of so unprecedented a state of things as a young king without a *maîtresse-en-titre*, resolved to attempt to bring about the change they had long vainly been waiting for. They looked on the cardinal as the cause of the king's persistent indifference to the unceasing attacks made upon him by aspiring ladies. By insidiously disparaging him, as too much attached to the "Système Antiquaille," they hoped to succeed in undermining his influence; also securing his dismission. The Duc de Richelieu secretly supported these views of

the younger courtiers. He was a favourite with the king, whose *ennui* he sometimes dispelled by highly embellished narrations of his numerous adventures. He would also gaily rally him on his "*extrème sagesse*," and laughingly suggest that *la belle* Mdlle. de A——, or Mdme. de B—— might almost contest the palm of beauty with the queen.

Louis XV. was as remarkably taciturn, as polite and gracious in manner. He therefore replied not to this *badinage*, which he permitted because it amused him. He smiled only; what his thoughts were it would have been difficult to guess. To hint at the cardinal's imperfections was, as Richelieu doubtless knew, more perilous than to insinuate that there were younger and fairer women than the queen. He did not venture to attempt it, but discreetly left that hazardous part of the intrigue to others.

The Duc de Gêvres was at his château at St. Ouen, when the king suddenly took a fancy to employ his idle hours in working tapestry, as so many gentlemen did at that period. Impatient to begin, a messenger was despatched immediately to Paris, for canvas for the seats of four chairs, wools, silks, needles, and whatever else might be needed for his undertaking; another

messenger, at the same time, went off in all haste to summon the Duc de Gêvres to Versailles. He excelled in all the fashionable gentlemanlike needlework of the day, and the king wished for instruction from so great a master in the art. The duke lived in princely style at St. Ouen—chamberlains, gentlemen of the household, and a retinue scarcely less numerous than that usually accompanying the king. Yet he was overwhelmed with debts, and his estates were mortgaged. His hôtel in Paris was let as a gambling house, and from his share of the proceeds of the tables he now derived his sole income. It was, however, a large one; for gambling had become a mania with all classes.

When the messenger from Versailles arrived at St. Ouen, the duke, slightly indisposed it was said, was reclining supported by cushions, on a couch of green and gold damask, with curtains of the same, looped back by green ribands and roses. He was wrapped in a wadded robe de chambre of green and gold silk; but, as a covering for his head, instead of a cap of some sort, the interesting invalid wore a grey felt Henri IV. hat, bordered with green and gold, and adorned with a long green feather. A

green and gold coverlet was partly thrown over him, from under which peeped forth a green and gold slipper. A green and gold fan, and a bunch of rue for a *bouquet*, lay on the couch; a green and gold work-table stood beside it, on which were his scissors and prints for *découpure*. His tapestry frame was near at hand; but he was then amusing himself with green silk and gold thread knotting.

In spite of his distressingly enfeebled condition, the duke magnanimously responded to the call of his sovereign. The Duc d'Epernon (whose especial weakness was a fondness for surgery, and who always had a lancet with him; being ready and willing to bleed anyone weak enough to allow him) accompanied his friend, and with all speed they proceeded to Versailles. The king had received the materials for his work, and was admiring the designs for his chair seats. The young Comte de Maurepas, already known for his caustic remarks, was with him. After listening to the eloquence of the duke on the subject of needlework, but apparently with more contempt than admiration, the count said, addressing the king: "Sire, your majesty is far more courageous than your great ancestor, Louis XIV."

"How so?" inquired the king.

"He," replied Maurepas, "would never undertake more than one *siège* (siege) at a time; but your majesty has the courage to undertake four."

Whether the king received this remark as complimentary, or otherwise, we are not informed.

The tapestry work afforded the Duc de Gêvres and the other courtiers in his plot, the opportunity they had desired of impressing their views on the mind of the king. And they seem to have brought him so near to their way of thinking, that he agreed with them that the cardinal had arrived at a time of life when the business of State must naturally be a burden, and that it was desirable to relieve him of it. His courtiers were delighted; but were unwilling to have it known that it was they who had advised the displacement of Fleury. The king promised absolute secrecy. But the cardinal had more friends than foes in the court. Secrets to be kept there "should be dumb to very walls." But this secret was known at Issy, where the cardinal was staying, the very next day.

Fleury never remonstrated. Repairing at

once to Versailles, he tendered his resignation, assigning, as a reason for so doing, those considerations urged on the king by the Duc de Gêvres on the previous morning. The king was confused; he seemed as one conscience-stricken. The horrors of the impending situation at the same time rose up before his indolent mind. How was he to carry on the government of his kingdom if his preceptor were not at his elbow to direct him? Where find a minister disinterested and able as Fleury had proved himself? or, if as able, that could replace the confidant, the friend, the parent he had been to him from childhood? He implored the old cardinal still to keep in his hands the guidance of the helm of State; and at the same time informed him who were his foes, and the nature of their counsels. More disposed to be amused at this shallow intrigue, than to take revenge on the tapestry-working statesmen; the cardinal thought the duke and his companions sufficiently punished by their mortification at the exposure of their schemes, and the order from him, as minister, signed by the king, to refrain from visiting either Paris or Versailles for the next few months.

This plot, which threatened so much and

achieved so little, was soon after the theme of conversation and laughter in the *salons* as the "*conspiration des marmousets*," an epithet which did not tend to soothe the vexed feelings of its authors. However, one result of this intrigue was to convince the court that the reign of Fleury was to endure to the end of his days. As he had passed his eightieth year, there were many who believed or hoped that the term of those days was nigh at hand. Yet it was generally conceded that the king must at once be roused from his lethargy, apathy, or whatever the spell might be, that rendered him insensible to the blandishments of beauty, and blinded him to the faded appearance of the queen. The freshness of her complexion was gone; she had a careworn look, and, in her manner generally, there was an expression of languor. With her seven children grouped around her, she looked staid and matronly as a woman of forty, though but in her thirty-first year; the king was in his twenty-fourth, and probably more remarkably handsome than at any other period of his life.

Unfortunately, the queen was growing jealous, and, being wanting in tact and spirit, displayed her feelings ridiculously. A certain

Madame de Gontaut, an exceedingly pretty woman, whom the queen suspected of a desire to supplant her, was made to feel her resentment by a constant fault-finding with her headdress. Whenever she made her appearance, dressed, as she believed, to perfection, poor Marie Leczinska would single her out for disapproving remarks. Calling her to her, she proceeded, with an affectation of graciousness, to remedy the supposed defective arrangement of the lady's *coiffure*, her object being nothing more than to ruffle and disarrange it, that she might appear to disadvantage in the eyes of the king. It was a very poor *ruse*, and caused much amusement; to none more than to Madame de Gontaut herself—a sparkling brunette, to whose beauty a slight dishevelment of the hair often gave added piquancy.

But it was not Madame de Gontaut, but Mdlle. de Nesle—soon after Comtesse de Mailly—who was destined to fill the honourable post of *maîtresse-en-titre*, so long tantalizingly kept vacant. She has been compared to the Duchesse de la Vallière; but except that the countess, like the duchess, was a king's mistress, the resemblance between them is not striking. Previous to a full assumption of the new dig-

nity, the etiquette seems to have been, presentation to the queen, and her acceptance of her rival, whether willing or not, as one of the ladies of the palace.

Madame de Mailly, one learns with surprise, was of the Rambouillet circle (surely a stray black sheep that had slipped in unawares). She was the eldest of the five daughters of the Marquis de Nesle. Richelieu had remarked her, as possessing the audacity and effrontery necessary "*pour se jeter à la tête du roi*," which she did with all the fervour of a bacchante: for she loved the juice of the grape, and especially foaming champagne, which she challenged the king to drink with her, bumper for bumper. In their earlier revels and *petits-soupers* she far surpassed him in the quantity she could take with impunity. The cardinal is said to have approved the choice of this woman as a mistress for the king. Perceiving that a mistress was inevitable, he looked upon her selection as an affair of State. Madame de Mailly was considered disinterested—attached to the king, in fact. She would therefore be an inexpensive superfluity, and as she possessed neither ability nor ambition, it was not likely she would attempt to interfere in the concerns of government: consequently he regarded her

as the most eligible of the many noble ladies then contending for the vacant post.

The king had scarcely a voice in the matter. He neither loved nor admired Madame de Mailly. He did not seek her, but accepted her as the mistress provided for him, with the same apathy and indifference he had shown when provided with a wife. Perhaps no young man was ever more entirely thrust into vice than Louis XV. The dissolute men and women of the court, reared in the depraved society of the regency, long despaired of his becoming one of them. But the first plunge taken, unhappily, none dived deeper into the slough of vice than he. Fits of remorse oppressed him at times, and he continued strictly to perform the outward duties of religion. The queen, unintellectual and full of narrow-minded bigotry, was incapable of exerting any beneficial influence upon him. The more he became alienated from her, the more humble and timid did she appear in his presence; though, as in his religion, so in every mark of outward respect towards his wife, he was never known to fail.

Following the example of the *grand seigneurs* of his court, he had his *petite maison*—

purchasing Choisy for that purpose. There he had his private kitchen, fitted up with every requisite for the practice of the art of which he was so efficient an *amateur*. Wearing the white jacket, apron, and cap of a *chef-de-cuisine*, he would often prepare some choice *plat*, to regale those of his *intimes* who were admitted to share in the orgies of the *petits-soupers* of Choisy. The disorder that prevailed there becoming publicly known, so much indignation was expressed by the people, that the cardinal thought it right to remonstrate on such conduct. The king replied, "*très sèchement*," as De Tocqueville observes: "*Je vous ai abandonné la conduite de mon royaume; j'espère que vous me laisseriez maître de la mienne.*"

At about the same time that the change took place in the habits of Louis XV., news was received of the death of Augustus of Poland, and the re-election of Stanislaus to the throne he already had found so unstable a seat. He was by no means desirous of resuming so uncertain a dignity. Russia, his former foe, favoured the pretensions of another Elector of Saxony, Augustus, the late king's son; but three-fourths of the nation had pronounced in favour of the deposed King Stanislaus. Con-

tent in his retirement at Weissenberg, he still made it a point of honour to respond to the call of his countrymen, lest it should appear to them that his courage was not equal to his fortunes. Yet he knew from experience how fickle was the temperament of this "nation of high-souled cavaliers;" that fidelity was not to be relied upon, but rather desertion when fidelity should most be needed.

Without money or troops—though he probably depended on aid from France—he set out for Poland, entered Warsaw in disguise, and a few days after was proclaimed king by his partizans. A Russian army of ten thousand men, commanded by the famous General Munich, with auxiliary troops from Austria, had already entered Poland, to support the claims of the Elector. The partizans of Stanislaus then fell away from him, or were quickly dispersed; he escaping, with difficulty, to Dantzic, where, however, he was well received. There he awaited the French troops. Neither Louis XV. nor the cardinal—indisposed as was the latter to engage in war—could entirely desert him. A small detachment of fifteen hundred men was therefore embarked in two or three of the crazy old vessels then composing the French navy.

Dantzic was besieged by Munich when the French troops arrived in the Sound. The futility of the aid he had brought induced the commander of the expedition to refrain from landing his men. But his return to France was opposed by the young Comte Bréhant de Plélo, the French Envoy at Copenhagen. He thought it an ignominious flight, dishonouring to France; and, taking upon himself the command of the expedition, Dantzic was again approached. The troops were disembarked, and the first Russian line attacked; but the daring young commander was quickly overpowered. He fell, sword in hand, fighting, and covered with wounds. He had anticipated such a fate; but resolved to brave it, to save the honour of the French name. His small detachment of troops capitulated, after holding out for some time in the advantageous position they had taken up. They were sent to St. Petersburg, and, by command of the Empress Anne, treated with marked distinction.

Dantzic was taken by the Russian general. A price was set on the head of Stanislaus, who, however, aided by some of his followers, contrived to leave the city unrecognized. After assuming various disguises, and encountering

CHAPTER XXIII.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau—The Salon of Mdme. Dupin.—Jean-Jacques and Mdme. de Crequy.—Faüsses Confidences.—Jean-Jacques' Returns to Paris.—Voltaire's Grand Homme.—Un Mari, à la Mode Louis XV.—Voltaire's "Mahomet."—Début of Mdlle. Clairon.—A Triumph.—Sensation for the Salons.

N the autumn of 1741, Jean-Jacques Rousseau—whom, after a wandering aimless life, we now first hear of in Paris—had lately arrived from Venice, where he had cultivated, to a certain extent, a natural taste for music. Undue confidence in his musical talent, and in the value of some pleasing but simple compositions, flattered him with the hope of an artistic career. He had invented, as he supposed, a new system of musical notation by figures, which he was desirous of explaining in a discourse addressed to the members of the Academie des Sciences. In

August, 1742, M. Reaumer procured him the opportunity he sought, and Jean-Jacques developed his scheme to a committee of qualified musicians, of whom Rameau, now in merited repute, was one.

To his immense disappointment, Rousseau learned that his system was not new, and that it had been already pronounced impracticable. He was then thirty years of age; eaten up by vanity; burning with a desire for notoriety; "willing to be hanged," as Voltaire said, "could he but have been gratified by his name being placed on the scaffold." An operatic trifle, "Les Muses Galantes," was the means of introducing him to M. de La Poplinière, at whose private theatre it was performed, and met with the approval of a friendly audience.

But Rousseau's ambition soared far beyond the reputation of an amateur; and his arrogance, no less than his ignorance, was displayed in his remark on the works of Rameau, whose life had been spent in the scientific study of music, to which he had been led by enthusiastic love of it from childhood. "*Aux Iroquois ces distillateurs d'accords buraques!*" exclaimed Jean-Jacques, in his jealousy; while believing also that Rameau had seen a rival in him and his

" Muses Galantes." Irritable, restless, distrustful, capricious, morbidly sensitive, a martyr to hypochondria, Jean-Jacques, sometimes awakened sympathy, which he either repelled with brutality, or rewarded with base ingratitude; while those who endeavoured to serve him, he hated and maligned. Idealized in a hundred volumes, a hundred years after his death, he no doubt appears a very different person from the Rousseau known to his contemporaries. But with such speculations these pages are not concerned.

As secretary in the family of the rich fermier-général, Dupin, Rousseau next appears on the scene. He has described the *salon* of Mdme. Dupin as frequented by the most distinguished society in Paris. Wealth, beauty, rank and learning; foreign ambassadors, *grands seigneurs, et dames titrées*, forming her circle; according to Jean-Jacques. It may however be considered a somewhat exaggerated account of *un salon bourgeois*. At this time he was "*un assez joli jeune homme*," Madame de Crequy informs us, in the memoirs edited by M. Chanloup. He had called on Madame de Crequy, on the part of Madame Dupin, to enquire into the character of a servant. The *grande dame*

was surprised that the *dame bourgeoise* should send to her for information of that nature, and was about to desire the messenger to make his enquiries of her *intendant*, when a something in the expression of his countenance, she says, interested her.

Instead of acting on her first impulse and curtly dismissing him, she desired he would wait awhile. On inquiry, it appeared that the discharged servant, being a Protestant, had been unwilling to attend prayers in the private chapel of the château. The orthodox *intendant* had therefore dismissed him. On hearing this, Jean-Jacques, in a melancholy tone, informed Madame de Crequy that he, too, was a Protestant, also a Swiss. This induced the lady to question him further, and they were deep in theological argument when the Nuncio was announced.

Rousseau had been humbly standing, hat in hand, while Madame de Crequy reasoned with him on his heresy. He was now motioned to a seat, which, in the utmost confusion, he stumbled into (his *gauchérie* was excessive), and the conversation then turned on Switzerland, which Jean-Jacques described in the glowing language of one carried back in imagination to

the loved and regretted scenes of his youth. Madame de Crequy was convinced that M. Rousseau, although a heretic, possessed *beaucoup d'esprit*, and a warm heart, with much learning, and candour of disposition. She told him she would be glad to see him again, and when he took leave, rose from her seat to bid him farewell. This, above all things, pleased him. "He needed it," he said, "as an encouragement, and to put him at ease in the presence of the great." "The noble, or rather ignoble, savage" was then concealed under the mask of obsequiousness, and an air of mock humility. A few more years were required fully to develop "*l'homme de la nature.*"

In the course of subsequent visits to Madame de Crequy, she discovered that he amused her with "*fausses confidences.*" Naturally she was annoyed; but excused it, because she perceived, she said, "that he had more illusions in his head than want of truth in his character"—a judgment in which leniency and truth were combined. He had an illness, it appears, about this time. On his recovery he obtained, through the influence of the Dupin family, the post of private secretary to M. de Montaigu, then leaving Paris for Venice, as ambassador. This

engagement continued for nearly two years, but with so much mutual dissatisfaction that it is surprising it lasted so long. In 1745 Jean-Jacques returned to Paris, poor in purse and with but gloomy prospects for the future. He was preparing that pretty little opera, "Le Dévin du Village." It was to his music he looked for success. He was also reading and studying. As a writer his talent was scarcely yet known even to himself. Somewhere about this time he made the acquaintance of Grimm and Diderot; but, as Marmontel says, "Jean-Jacques *n'avait pas encore prit couleur.*"

Voltaire had been in Paris occasionally only for several years. He says in those brief "Mémoires de M. de Voltaire, écrites par lui-même;" "I was weary of the idle and turbulent life of Paris; of the crowd of *petits-maîtres;* of the worthless books printed "*avec approbation et privilège du roi;*" and of the meannesses and plagiarisms of the paltry wretches who dishonoured literature, when, in 1733, I became acquainted with a lady whose opinions were much the same as my own. She had taken the resolution to spend several years in the country, far from the tumult of society, in order

to cultivate her mind. This lady was the Marquise du Châtelet."

She was Voltaire's "respectable Emilie," sometimes "*la divine*," "*la belle*," "*la sublime*." He represents her, with much exaggeration, as rivalling Madame Dacier in classical learning. She was a philosopher, of course, a mathematician, metaphysician, geometrician, *esprit fort*, *and* "*grand homme*." Voltaire spent six years with her at her château at Cirey, on the frontiers of Lorraine—a dilapidated old château, of which the friends, in the intervals of their literary pursuits, superintended the repairing and embellishing. There, too, they received the visits of the philosophers and *savants* who passed that way; the amiable Emilie's courtesies to her learned guests often exciting bitter pangs of jealousy in the breast of Voltaire. For Emilie had a susceptible heart, "*grand homme*" though she was, not only in the complimentary sense in which Voltaire applied the epithet, but personally also in her outward appearance.

She resembled, "*un vilain cent garde*," says her cousin, Madame de Crequy; and all her learning she profanely describes as "a sort of indigestible hotch-potch." The Marquis du

Châtelet was Lieutenant-général of the province of Lorraine. A strict observer of the marital etiquette of the Louis XV. period, he never intruded on the learned leisure of his wife and her "guide, philosopher, and friend."

It was, however, in the solitude of Cirey that Voltaire wrote "Alzire," "Mérope," "L'Enfant Prodigue," and "Mahomet," and began his "Histoire générale depuis Charlemagne," etc.

A lawsuit then obliged Madame de Châtelet to take a journey to Brussels. Voltaire accompanied her; and, her legal business terminating in her favour, she became the possessor of the splendid Hôtel Lambert, in the Ile St. Louis, where she received the philosophers of extremest opinions, and the prosiest and profoundest of the *savants*. But as this terrible blue-stocking gave little or no heed to suppers and dinners, even the most learned *bêtes* of the world of philosophy preferred the *salon* and well-spread table of the more hospitable Madame de Tencin.

Voltaire, on returning to Paris, was desirous of producing his play of "Mahomet," at the Théâtre Français. It had been played at Lille, in 1741, as he wished to judge of its probable effect before bringing it out in Paris. While

present at its first representation at Lille, a note from the King of Prussia, informing him of the victory at Molwitz, was received by Voltaire, who immediately read it to the audience. "You will see," he said to them, "how this victory will lead to another." But this can scarcely be called wit—rather it was clap-trap that appears to have answered the purpose he intended. The play of "Mahomet" was submitted to Crébillon in Paris. The censor condemned it. Voltaire complained to Fleury, who reversed the judgment of Crébillon, and the play was produced with great success. He afterwards, when seeking admission to the academy — objection being taken by Bishop Boyer to this work—sent it to the Pope, Benedict XIV., who replied very courteously, adding a gold medal to his thanks for the "Belissima tragédia." Mdlle. Dumesnil played the heroine with her accustomed ability, and contributed greatly towards its success.

The theatre was well attended at this period. The greater part of Voltaire's plays had been written and produced, and had proved attractive. The *troupe* was also highly talented. Mdlle. Quinault had retired to enjoy her ample fortune in private life, though still comparatively young

and at the height of her fame. "La belle d'Angeville" shone as a *soubrette*, and Mdlle. Dumesnil was still unrivalled in *la haute tragédie*, when a new *débutante* was announced. The *début* of a new actor or actress, or the first representation of a new play, was sure to bring an overflowing audience, filling every part of the house, and crowding the stage. The *débutante*, on this occasion, was a young actress of eighteen or nineteen, who for some years had wandered with itinerant *troupes* from theatre to theatre through the provinces, playing in tragedy or comedy, or taking the *rôle* of prima donna in operatic pieces, and *première danseuse* in a *ballet*.

She had, however, gained some reputation at Rouen in the leading *soubrette* parts, and was now engaged to play alternately with Mdlle. d'Angeville in the same line of characters. For her *débuts*, to the surprise of the whole *troupe*, she selected three tragedy parts, the opening one being Phèdre, the *rôle de triomphe* of Mdlle. Dumesnil. Her presumption astonished the great actress, and excited general ridicule. Curiosity brought a larger audience than usual, and an ignominious failure was anticipated.

The curtain rises. The expected Abigail enters. Many of the audience had seen her at Rouen; but few—except that they are aware it is Mdlle. Clairon's *début* they are to witness—would recognize her in that stately actress, who treads the stage with the dignity and grace of a finished *artiste*. Perhaps now for the first time they notice her finely-chiselled features, her noble brow, and air of command; little suited indeed to a lively *soubrette*, but which full well become Phèdre. Her voice, too—so full in its tones, so clear, deep and impassioned—at once makes its due impression on her hearers.

Mdlle. Clairon has certainly taken her audience by surprise, and the town by storm; for they perceive that a great actress is before them. Her supposed foolish vanity is found to be conscious talent. The opportunity had come for its development; she has fully justified the confidence she felt in her own powers, and it is unanimously acknowledged that what she attempted she has done well, even more than well—grandly.

Three young men of rising literary reputation—Diderot, d'Alembert, and Grimm—witnessed this first appearance of Mdlle.

Clairon in tragedy. They had expected an amusing rather than an edifying performance. Now, they eagerly seek the young actress to offer their congratulations, before leaving the theatre to spread her fame in the *salons*.

Woodburytype.

MDLLE. CLAIRON.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Death of Cardinal Fleury.—His Government of France.—Proposed Monument to Fleury.—Disappointed Ambition.—Threatened Descent on England.—A Rival to Maurice de Saxe.—Seeking Refuge at Versailles.—The King's Hospitality.—The "Mutual Friend."—The Cardinal's Successor.—Going to the Wars.—A Solemn Thanksgiving.—Mdme. Le Normand d'Etioles.—Illness of the King.—"Le Bien-Aimé."—Louis' Letter to the Duchess.—Death of the Duchess.—Her Last Words.

REAT changes had taken place in France during the last four years, both politically and socially. There had been war; many notabilities had passed away from the stage of life, and new celebrities had appeared. In 1736, died Louis the XIV.'s favourite son, the Duc du Maine. His widowed duchess had since reappeared in the *beau monde*, and received the *beaux esprits*, at Sceaux, with even greater *éclat* than before. The Rambouillet circle was broken up; the Comte de Toulouse—several years the duke's junior—having died in 1737. His son, the

Duc de Penthièvre, had gone to the wars, and, at the age of seventeen, had distinguished himself at the battle of Dettingen—that battle so disastrous to France, the ally of Charles Albert of Bavière, then contending with Maria Theresa for the Empire of Germany.

The Marquis de Fleury, nephew of the cardinal, was killed in that battle, and not long after—January 29, 1743—the cardinal died at Issy, while the war, undertaken contrary to his wishes and advice, was still raging. He had completed, within two or three months, his ninetieth year, and the seventeenth of his government. Rarely has any statesman begun his public career so late in life, or, having done so, retained power so long.

He was still in full possession of his mental faculties, but was oppressed with anxious fears as to the result of the war, and disturbed at the large expenditure of the public money it necessitated. His policy had been so essentially a policy of peace and conciliation, that he had not thought it necessary even to be ready for war, in order the better to ensure a continuance of peace. "*La paix au dehors, l'économie au dedans*," was his political motto, and the heaviest charge brought against him, as mini-

ster, was that in his condescension towards other nations, and fear of displeasing them, he sacrificed too much for the love, or the need, of peace.

Unlike Richelieu and Mazarin, Fleury left no fortune to his family. Two or three recently conferred empty titles and honours, and the post of *Premier gentilhomme de la chambre*, to his nephew, de Rosset, was all they derived from him. The revenue of his benefice was his only income. His tastes were simple; he was opposed to any assumption of state, or ostentatious parade. He had amassed no gold or silver plate, no collection of *objets d'art.* The furniture of his small establishment comprised only what was useful and good, without ornament; its value was estimated at not more than five thousand écus. "He governed France," writes de Tocqueville, "as he governed his own well-regulated small household, with the strictest order, exactness, and economy." The reputation of a great minister was denied him, but he was regretted throughout France, as a just and honourable one, who possessing great power, used it to promote, to the best of his ability, the welfare of the people and the prosperity of the nation.

As every event, however serious, was then seized upon for the subject of an epigram, it was said, when the cardinal died, that "France having been ailing for the space of a hundred years, had been treated successively by three physicians, all attired in red. The first (Richelieu) had bled her; the second (Mazarin) had purged her; and the third (Fleury) had put her on a diet."

The king, with the Dauphin, visited him constantly during his last illness, which was rather a gradual sinking of nature than any decided malady. Brought up by him, accustomed to obey him, to confide in him, and to look upon him as a father, Louis XV., naturally, was much affected by the death of the aged cardinal; more so, probably, than by any other bereavement or occurrence of his life. He, for a long time, proposed to erect a monument to his memory, and was often engaged with Soufflot, the architect, in tracing designs for one. But as his sorrow subsided, his natural indolence and the pleasures of his dissolute court gradually effaced from his mind the memory of Fleury, and the proposed monument never was executed.

The Cardinal de Tencin, who owed his *barretta* to the Chevalier Saint-George, had

expected to succeed to Fleury's post. But the king, in his last conversations with the cardinal-minister, had been counselled by him to take the reins of government into his own hands, and he resolved to follow his counsels. All the intrigues of Madame de Tencin and her friends, to obtain for her brother the coveted appointment, proved ineffectual—the honorary title of minister, with a seat in the council chamber, but with neither *portefeuille* nor emolument, was the limit of her success. De Tencin had bound himself, in return for his elevation to the cardinalate, to support the cause of the Pretender, and to urge on the king the invasion of England. Though without any real weight in the council, he could at least lift his voice in behalf of the Chevalier. He did so, and pleaded his cause so warmly, that both king and council, apparently, were gained over to his views.

All that he asked was granted. As many vessels as Brest and Rochefort could muster and fit out were assembled to embark troops. The king declared war against England, and Prince Charles Edward left Rome to join the French and to put himself under the guidance of Maréchal de Saxe. These preparations, however, were actually made for a very different object from

the ostensible one. The threatened descent on England concealed a real intention of invading Holland. The fleet put to sea, but neither England nor Holland could be reached. A violent storm arose—the ships were scattered; some were lost, others, much disabled, contrived to return to France. The expedition was at an end, for there was no other fleet to fit out, and the cardinal and his sister lamented together over their inability to evince, as they had proposed, their gratitude to the Chevalier—"*Mais qu'importe!*" exclaimed Richelieu, who found Madame de Tencin in tears. "*La politesse est toujours faite.*"

According to some writers, one of the most poignant sorrows of the old cardinal-minister's last days was the prospect he saw of the evil influence of a mistress on the affairs of State. He had already been accused of jealousy of Madame de Vintimille. Death had removed her from his path, but in her successor, Madame de la Tournelle, he foresaw for the king even greater cause for alarm. The former was plain in feature, but lively, *spirituelle*, and ambitious. The latter, from the imperiousness of her manner, had gained the name of "*la grande princesse.*" She was a young widow, very

beautiful; ambitious of power, and lofty in her sentiments—being fond of heroes, and determined to make of Louis XV. a hero, and a rival to Maurice de Saxe, whom she especially admired.

As her sister was compared to Madame de la Vallière, so she, with as little reason, was likened to Agnes Sorel. It should rather have been Madame de Montespan. She had acquired so much influence over the king, by a system of artful coquetry, and an assumption of grand airs, that to gratify her, he seemed likely to become as prodigal as hitherto he had been parsimonious—prodigal of the public money, of course (now that there was no cardinal to remonstrate), not of his own private hoards, even for *la belle* Madame de la Tournelle. This lady was a *protégée* of the Duc de Gêvres—again high in favour—and the Duc de Richelieu, who had become the confidant of the king and his instructor in vice. To excite his curiosity, they made her beauty their constant theme of admiration, and arranged her introduction to him in a very singular and unusual manner.

She and her sister, Madame de Flavacourt, had been residing with their grandmother,

the Duchesse de Mazarin, who dying at this time, and her hôtel being inherited by the Comte de Maurepas, the sisters were compelled to seek another abode. The duchess having been *dame d'atours de la reine*, had an apartment at Versailles. Taking advantage of this, Madame de la Tournelle had the audacity, on leaving the Hôtel Maurepas—having concerted with her friends—to order her chair to be carried to Versailles when the king and his courtiers were taking the usual promenade on the terrace.* She alighted in front of the palace, and dismissed her *porteurs*, to the great surprise of the grandees assembled there—de Gêvres and de Richelieu excepted. After greeting the lady, and conversing with her for a few minutes, the Duc de Gêvres announced to the king that this was the young and beautiful Madame de la Tournelle. That, driven from the home of her late relative, she had come to seek a temporary refuge in the duchess's apartment in the royal château.

The lady was then led forward and presented to the king by the Duc de Richelieu.

* All the old usages and etiquette of the time of Louis XIV. were still rigidly kept up.

His majesty saw that she was young and fair, and was almost as much charmed by the *naïveté* of her proceeding as with her beauty. "*Il plaisanta avec elle sur son aventure,*" Soulavie tells us, and assigned her an apartment in the palace. He also gave shelter to Madame de Flavacourt under his hospitable roof. The simple Marie Leczinska received Madame de la Tournelle very kindly, and both she and her sister were added to the list of her *dames du palais*. But, alas, for the king; the hand of the fair widow is sought by the handsome young Duc d'Agenois, to whose merits, she allows it to be known, she is by no means insensible. She keeps much to her apartments also; does not always accept the invitation—for she acknowledges no command—to share in the conyivialities of the *petits-soupers* at Choisy. Her pretext is, a very bad cold; so that the king enjoys but little of her society. When she does appear, she is usually so muffled up in an ample *coiffe*—being fearful of increasing her cold, or taking a fresh one in the draughty corridors of Versailles—that his majesty obtains but an occasional furtive glimpse of the beautiful face he longs to leisurely gaze on.

Carried on for months, this tantalizing sys-

tem becomes wearisome. It is intimated to Madame de la Tournelle that she will do well to retire from the court. Then steps in the "mutual friend,"—the infamous *debauché*—the Duc de Richelieu. He, now nearer fifty than forty, is the assiduous flatterer of the passions of the king. Honour suffers, no doubt; "*mais qu'importe*," as he would say, "favour is increased."

Le beau d'Agenois may have a face as handsome as the king's, but he has a remarkably light purse. He cannot transform Madame's small estate of Chateauroux into a wide domain and a duchy, and add to its modest revenue eighty thousand *livres* yearly. That is a feat which the king performs. Also, he presents her with the royal letters or documents, in which it is stated "we have created our well-beloved, etc., a duchess *pour sa vertu et son merite*," enclosed in a richly jewelled casket. All the girlish *espiéglerie* she had hitherto assumed, at once disappeared, and the same haughty defiant air adopted by the Marquise de Montespan towards the timid queen of Louis XIV., poor Marie Leczinska was compelled to tolerate in her lady of honour, the stately Duchesse de Chateauroux, now *maîtresse-en-titre*.

Fleury's advice to the king to dispense with a first minister, and to take the duties of that office on himself, she warmly approved. But his indolence and indifference were so great, that he would scarcely give himself the trouble even to attend to affairs left incomplete at the cardinal's death—"*ce qui se passe dans son royaume parait ne pas le regarder*," writes Madame de Tencin, "*Mais il s'amuse à diriger une politique occulte.*" "The king's secret," was no secret at all, and the aimlessness and futility of his so-called secret policy prevented it from greatly embarrassing his ministers in the conduct of public affairs. To certain propositions made to Louis XV. by Frederick of Prussia, the duchess counselled him to accede. Having done so, she tossed aside his embroidery frame, commanded him to gird on his sword, and to equip himself for making the approaching campaign in Flanders.

What a sensation it caused at Versailles! Who shall describe the consternation! from the queen down to the most insignificant lackey—for the news spread with astonishing rapidity, from the *grand salon* to the scullery—when the Duc de Richelieu announced that Madame de Chateauroux had exacted from the king a

promise to place himself at the head of his armies. That she should consent to separate herself from her lover was no less surprising than the unwonted energy of the king. It had not been understood that she, too, was going to the wars—though it was known that the mistresses of Louis XIV. had shared the dangers of that great warrior-hero's expeditions, and that in his triumphal progress through conquered lands, "three queens" accompanied him. It was, however, ascertained at the *œil de bœuf* the next morning, that the duchess also was going, after taking leave of the queen, and that the king would receive her at Epernay. "She was to fight at his side," said one report. "He had named her his aide-de-camp," said another. It was, indeed, a fertile theme, this going to the wars, for *bon-mots*, *epigrammes*, and *quolibets*.

It appears, too, to have been almost a party of pleasure. Elegant carriages, filled with still more elegant ladies, thronged the roads leading to Nancy and Metz. The king had already performed prodigies of valour when Mdme. la Duchesse arrived, and, to celebrate the taking of a fortress at which he had assisted, a Te Deum was about to be said, or sung, in the Cathedral of Lille. The duchess arrived in her carriage.

Grandes dames, grands seigneurs, and a crowd of young officers vied with each other in pressing forward to congratulate her. Presently arrived the king, to take part in the solemn thanksgiving. He was on horseback, and surrounded by a brilliant staff—booted and spurred, a clanking sword, a waving plume, and ah! so divinely handsome. Just, too, as the hero had ridden from the terrible field where his deeds of valour had been done, he entered the old stately cathedral.

Most considerately, his *prie-dieu* was placed immediately opposite the enclosed seat set apart for the duchess; as though that were the altar where he would most naturally desire to pay his vows and to find acceptance. "Radiantly happy she looked," we are told. A noble pride lighted up her beautiful face, and added lustre to her large dark eyes. For the wish of her heart was accomplished. She, at last, had a lover worthy of her—a lover who was both a hero and a king.

Amongst the gay throng that filled the cathedral, and placed where a full view of the triumphant dame and her royal lover was obtained, there looked earnestly upon them a lady, elegantly dressed, young and fair as the

duchess, and no less ambitious and unscrupulous; but infinitely more talented—it was Madame le Normand d'Etioles. Her husband had brought her hither to see this fine show, and "the pomp and circumstance of war." But where was the queen? At home, praying in her oratory—poor simple-minded woman. She should have said her prayers at Lille.

Balls and *fêtes* followed the thanksgivings, and banquets too; for Soubise was there, with Marin and his *sous-chefs* and an army of *marmitons*. The reviews were on a very grand scale. Bezenval says, a hundred thousand men were there, beside the forty thousand comprising the army of reserve under the Maréchal de Saxe. The campaign opened with the siege of Ménin; the king, at first, as ardent and valorous as before; but suddenly, either from weariness or *ennui*, he seemed to lose all interest in the war, no longer showed himself to his army, and passed his time chiefly in the society of the duchess and her sister, Madame de Lauraguais. On the 8th of August, while a Te Deum was being sung for the successful besieging of Château-Dauphin, the king was taken ill. The next day, malignant fever developed itself, and progressed rapidly. The Duc de Richelieu

and Madame de Chateauroux affected to disbelieve that he was in danger, and allowed no one but themselves in his apartment.

The young Duc de Chartres, son of the pious Duc d'Orleans, forced the *consigne*, as representative of his father, first prince of the blood, who alone had the right to do so. With him was Fitz-James, Bishop of Soissons. He explained to the king his danger; then confessed him, and, after Madame de Chateauroux, by his order, conveyed to her by Count d'Argenson, had been desired to leave Metz, gave him absolution and administered the last sacraments. The bishop was also authorized by Louis XV. to publicly express his regret for the flagrancy of his life, and the evil example he had set his people.

While the duchess was escaping from the threatened vengeance of the populace, in a carriage, lent her by the Maréchal de Bellisle, Marie Leczinska and the dauphin were on their way to Metz; where they were received by the king, then convalescent, with every appearance of pleasure and affection. The news of his illness and danger had reached Paris in the middle of the night. The churches were opened, and the people arose from their beds

and thronged to them to pray for his recovery. Their grief and distress were unbounded. Day and night eager crowds surrounded the houses of the ministers, hoping to learn that some change for the better had taken place. On the 14th the disease took a favourable turn, and a courier was the next day despatched to Paris with the news of his convalescence. Transports of delight hailed the news. The streets rang with the joyous cry, "*Nôtre roi est guéri.*" The courier who brought the welcome intelligence was carried in triumph through the city, and he and his horse were nearly suffocated by the kisses and embraces of the multitude, in the excitement of joy.

Louis speedily recovered, and, after the siege of Fribourg, returned to Paris. The ardent enthusiasm of the welcome he received momentarily affected him, and he asked—as well he might—"what he had done to merit so much love." But "Le bien aimé," the surname with which he from this time was distinguished, was not derived from the spontaneous cry of a devoted people, so much as from the gaily launched epithet—taken up and repeated by the almanacs—of one Vade, whom Voltaire calls "*un polisson.*" But all enthusiasm soon

ceased. Louis was fearfully bored by it. It seemed to indicate an expectation on the part of his subjects that the evil example which, when the fear of death was before his eyes, he acknowledged he had set them, was now to give place to a more reputable course of life. This was far from congenial to him, and he became cold and ceremonious in his behaviour to the queen; evinced great repugnance towards the dauphin, and covertly was seeking to renew his *liaison* with the duchess, whose "*bien aimé*" he alone cared to be.

She was assiduously playing *garde-malade* to the young Duc d'Agenois, who had been wounded in the Italian campaign. For her royal lover she affected a supreme contempt that annoyed him excessively. The courtiers perceiving where his inclinations lay, began to praise the firm and noble conduct of Madame de Chateauroux under the trying ordeal she had passed through at Metz. This gratified the king. Immediately, Maurepas, whom the duchess regarded as her enemy, was despatched with a letter, and further was charged to inform her, verbally, that "his majesty had no knowledge of what had occurred at Metz; that his esteem for her remained unchanged, and that he begged

she would return to the court and resume her office of *dame d'honneur* to the queen." She appeared so well satisfied that she extended her hand towards Maurepas, who respectfully knelt and kissed it. Later in the day, d'Argenson, who had delivered the order for her and her sister's retirement from Metz, appeared with a list of the courtiers and ministers enclosed in a letter from the king, requesting her to erase the names of those whom she would wish banished from the court. She obeyed. D'Argenson's name was the first. The next day she fell ill—perhaps from the excitement of her triumph—took to her bed, and, after an illness of a few weeks, died on the 4th of December, 1744.

Maurepas and d'Argenson were both suspected of poisoning the letters they were charged to convey to her. That Jesuit priests, commissioned by the confessors of the queen and the dauphin, had put arsenic in a box of *bonbons* the king was accustomed to send to her daily—and which were made by himself—was another mode of poisoning, as unlikely as the first, by which her death was accounted for.

The duchess was the second of the mis-

tresses of Louis XV. who had died within a year or two of each other. "*Vous savez si j'ai voulu votre gloire,*" were her last words to him, when he visited her on her death-bed.

END OF VOL. I.

LONDON:
Printed by Simmons & Botten, Shoe Lane, E.C.
H. L. & Co.

00037644

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 18 July, 2018